APRIL
Vol. I 1932 No. 3

The UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY

CONTENTS

Goethe: An Estimate — H. Walter 259

Goethe's Place in the History of Science — G. S. Brett 279

Greek Comedy — W. D. Woodhead 300

Civilization versus Culture — R. M. Maciver 316

Matthew Arnold and the Elizabethans — E. K. Brown 333

Marjorie Pickthall — W. E. Collin 352

The Contributors

Brett, G. S., Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto: Editor, University of Toronto Quarterly.

Brown, E. K., Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Toronto.

Collin, W. H., Assistant Professor of Romance Languages, University of Western Ontario.

Maciver, R. M., Professor of Sociology, Columbia University: formerly Professor in the Department of Political Science, University of Toronto.

Walter, H., Professor of German, McGill University, Montreal.

Woodhead, W. D., Professor of Greek, McGill University, Montreal: formerly Professor in the Department of Classics, University of Toronto.

GOETHE: AN ESTIMATE

H. WALTER

IN 1884 Professor Seeley of Cambridge published three essays on Goethe in the Contemporary Review, reprinted ten years later with considerable additions under the title *Goethe reviewed after sixty years*. The title of the present article might very well have been "Goethe reviewed after a hundred years" but for a very natural hesitation to challenge a comparison which might appear presumptuous with Professor Seeley's work. Nevertheless, this is a review written with a very similar purpose: to revise if necessary our estimate of Goethe, a task which will, in this year of the centenary, be attempted in many places and by many pens. Probably the present occasion is more significant, more likely to yield definite results than the mere lapse of sixty years which gave birth to Professor Seely's book.

When Professor Seeley wrote his essays for the Contemporary Review, the last of Goethe's grandsons was still alive and jealously guarding the treasures of the Goethe House. When the essays were reprinted in book form only nine of the *Goethe Jahrbücher* and about a dozen of the one hundred and forty volumes of the Weimar edition had been published. As this edition comprises fifty volumes of correspondence, all his diaries (which enable us to follow Goethe during many periods, not only day by day but often hour by hour) and, in addition to his completed works, all his fragments, plans and notes, we can dispense with most of the often very ingenious guesswork of the older biographers. We may say confidently that we have all obtainable facts before us, facts that have been sifted and resifted by an army of industrious scholars. This process of winnowing and

interpreting is likely to go on for an indefinite time, for the appeal of his stupendous personality must differ in the case of each individual student. So the question: "What think ye of Goethe?" may receive a different answer every time it is asked. Goethe himself sets the example by viewing the same events of his life and his own personality differently at different periods, a fact which is borne out by his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* and by his letters and conversations. No treatment of Goethe can therefore hope to meet with the approval of all readers. This looks like a warning; perhaps it is one.

Goethe in his *Iphigenie* makes his heroine say:

Es erzeugt nicht gleich
Ein Haus den Halbgott noch das Ungeheuer;
Erst eine Reihe Böser oder Guter
Bringt endlich das Entsetzen, bringt die Freude
Der Welt hervor.

In Goethe's ancestry we look in vain for such gradation of distinguished individuals leading finally up to Goethe. While on the mother's side we have a number of lawyers and other professional persons, on the father's side we find the usual humble occupations represented: small tradesmen, farmers and the inevitable blacksmith. Goethe's own grandfather on the father's side was a successful ladies' tailor, who laid the foundations of the prosperity of the Goethe family by taking as his second wife an opulent innkeeper's widow, whose very lucrative business he carried on.

The Goethes were not a vigorous stock. For generations back most of the children died young. His father Johann Kaspar was the youngest of a family of eleven, of whom the first eight died in childhood. Of Goethe's five brothers and sisters only one, his sister Cornelia, a hopeless neurotic, lived to grow up, and of Goethe's own

five children by Christiane only the first, August, survived, dying at the age of forty-one, a lamentable decadent.

Among the Goethes who live to a ripe old age, senile imbecility seems to be the rule. This certainly was the fate of Goethe's father and of the grandfather on the mother's side. Well may we ask with King Thoas:

Sage mir, durch welches Wunder
Von diesem wilden Stamme du entsprangst.

When Goethe writes:

Vom Vater hab' ich die Statur
Des Lebens ernstes Führen,
Vom Mütterchen die Frohnatur,
Die Lust am Fabuliren.

we have to remember that "des Lebens ernstes Führen" comprises a great deal more than would appear at first sight and than was perhaps present to Goethe's mind when he wrote these lines. He clearly inherited from his father, in addition to the methodical conduct of life, his parent's pedantry, his meticulousness, his coolness and stiffness in intercourse, his self-centred aloofness which, especially as Goethe got older, seemed to surround him with an impenetrable circle of frigidity. As to his mother, "die Lust am Fabuliren" needs no comment but the "Frohnatur" may give rise to serious misgivings. To begin with, Goethe was not, on the whole, a cheerful person like his mother, who, we are told, created an atmosphere of cheerfulness, optimism and benevolence around her. Where do we find anything similar in Goethe? Nor can Goethe by any stretch of the meaning of the term be called a cheerful poet. The predominant feature of his character is, rather, intense seriousness, and that he is more likely to owe to his father.

His mother's optimism was not entirely commend-

able. Her inclination to look at the bright side of things only constituted really a weakness of her character, inasmuch as it often degenerated into a reluctance to look at the dark side at all. She shunned the sight of suffering and death with the same superstitious dread manifested later by her son. No dying friend's or relative's bedside was ever cheered by a visit from Goethe. Schiller and Herder, who both lived at the time in Weimar within a few minutes walk from Goethe's house, were no exception. When his own wife, Christiane, was stricken by her fatal illness in 1816, Goethe took to his own room, which he only left on being informed that Christiane was dead. He dreaded all unpleasant impressions which in his case were probably intensified a hundredfold by the sensitiveness of the artist. To pass an unfavourable moral judgment on Goethe on that account is, of course, nonsense. A personality like Goethe's is made up of abnormalities which it is futile to try to reduce to ethical standards applicable to normal individuals.

It will readily be admitted that, on the whole, Goethe entered the world dubiously dowered. The stock from which he sprang seemed to hold out all the chances of an early death or an imbecile old age, and the mental characteristics he inherited from his parents were fraught with unpleasant potentialities.

As he owes little to heredity, so throughout the greater part of his life he owes little to the nature of his physical environment. Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born on the 28th of August, 1749 in Frankfurt on the Main. Around Frankfurt he weaves a halo of romance in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit* which prevents the ordinary reader from forming anything like a true estimate of the uninspiring character of the place. With the exception of one street

and a few squares it was dark and dirty. Its high walls and its moats filled with putrid stagnant water and its over-hanging houses kept out light and fresh air. The spirit of this "Free Imperial City" was so staunchly conservative that as late as 1848 it could be called "a mixture of prehistoric bone fragments, antediluvian customs and medieval institutions."

Leipzig where he began, or was supposed to begin, his law studies was equally unstimulating. It was all rococo, all caste and class distinction and its surroundings were of deadly dullness.

An obvious exception is Strassburg, an interesting city situated in a lovely country inhabited by a delightful people, knowing nothing of caste and class distinction, so unspoilt that they seemed to have grown straight out of the soil. In these surroundings the grandson of the burgomaster of Frankfurt could forget all about the exalted place he had occupied in the social hierarchy of his native city, the Leipzig dandy could shed his ruffles and his affectation and the pietist of the second Frankfurt period could step out of the fog of his mysticism into the bright sunlight of reality.

Weimar still lives in the imagination of the people as the Athens on the Ilm. There never was a place under the sun less like Athens, at least at the time of Goethe's arrival. It was a town of 6000 inhabitants. Most of the houses were old and ugly and few had more than one storey. The streets were so narrow and ill-paved that few people ventured out at night. In the morning the inhabitants were awakened by the lowing of the cow and her calf driven along the main street accompanied by a hornblowing herdsman. The inhabitants were mostly small tradesmen or farmers, practically without culture. If Weimar had a much better reputation than

the above description seems to warrant, this was due to the sedulous trumpeting of Böttiger, who wrote for numerous journals glowing accounts of the splendours of Weimar, making it a centre of art and culture attracting crowds of Englishmen and Frenchmen. In reality there was only one Englishman and he could not get away because he was bankrupt. The cultural resources consisted of a bookseller who kept very few recent publications in stock, a painter who conducted a drawing-school and a sculptor who worked exclusively in clay and whose modest workshop is dubbed by Böttiger "Das Keramische Institut".

The cultural atmosphere of the Court, too, has been strongly idealized in popular tradition. When Goethe arrived Wieland was the only personality of any distinction to be met there. Most of the courtiers were people of unmistakable mediocrity. As time went on there seemed to be little improvement. When in 1803 Mme. de Stael visited Weimar she was of opinion that with the exception of the literary men of Weimar there was not at the Court a man worth talking to. "They were all," she said, "just corporals who indeed did not smoke in society but that was the only thing that differentiated them from the castle guard."

The Duke, Carl August, was full of good intentions, but apart from that very commonplace. Most of Goethe's poetry was quite beyond him. He was wanting in all the qualities that are prerequisites in a ruler. He had neither commonsense, nor self-restraint nor consistency. He showed his absolute unfitness for his task in the selection of his functionaries when he piled office after office upon an inexperienced novice in administration like Goethe, whom he put in charge of the departments of finance, mines, roads and even the little army, of all

of which Goethe knew as little as his illustrious master. The Dowager Duchess with Frau von Stein made during Goethe's first years the only bright spot in the life of the Court.

Italy proved hardly more inspiring to Goethe, the poet, than Weimar. Possibly even less. The main advantage in going to Italy was not because Italy was Italy, but because Italy was not Weimar, which was beginning to suffocate him. If it is permissible to judge of the degree of inspiration he received by the net result of nearly two years in that wonderful country we feel tempted to wonder whether any other country might not have done just as well. Except for the change it meant and the opportunity it afforded to break entirely with a past which had become a nightmare, the result was very poor.

Apart from the opportunity and leisure to put the finishing touches on Iphigenie and Egmont, works which owe nothing to Italy as Italy, the poet was not enriched by his stay in that country. He did not carry away with him any fresh inspiration. He tells us of no new literary projects he formed in his mind there. He visits the sacred spots hallowed by the memories of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso and Ariosto but establishes no closer contact. We hear nothing of a renewal of acquaintance with the works of these poets.

The most important result of his stay in Italy was that he found himself as Goethe, as so much more than a poet or an artist. He does not cease to be a poet but from now on the poet is apt to be overshadowed by the critic, the scientist and the thinker. That this should have been so has often been regretted by lovers of poetry, who forget that Goethe's chief object in life was not so much to write poetry as to live his life fully,

according to all that was in him. There was a great deal more in Goethe than poetry.

When he returned to Weimar in 1788 relieved of most of his irksome administrative functions, a result which might have been foreseen made itself felt at once. During his prolonged absence he completely lost touch with Weimar and Weimar with him. Weimar had, of course, not changed, but Goethe had. When he first came to Weimar the life there seemed to him the very essence of life and its licence the very essence of freedom. He only gradually understood that he could really not move an inch without being hampered by restraints on all sides, not the least of these inhibitory influences being Frau von Stein. Absence from Weimar had taught him the blessings of a larger freedom such as a great personality needs for the full unfolding of his powers.

Of course such larger freedom could be had in Weimar at any time, but at a price, and now he was ready to pay it. He had to cut himself more and more adrift from the thought and activities of his fellow citizens. Henceforth he looms perhaps larger and more mysterious in their eyes but he could hardly be accounted a popular figure for several reasons. The princely salary the Duke continued to pay him even during his prolonged Italian holiday had excited justifiable envy in a country as poor as Saxe-Weimar. Peculiarities, some inherited from his father and some his own, became unpleasantly emphasized: he became colder, prouder and more pedantic than ever. The critical and even hostile atmosphere created around him with regard to his free relations with Christiane embittered and isolated him and wore him out. There is really only one event of his later life that makes him come out of his hermitlike existence—his friendship with Schiller which proved so stimulating to both,

although more so to Schiller than to Goethe. After Schiller's death Weimar ceases to hold any attraction for him. Indeed he frequently seeks refuge in Jena where he spends long periods.

If as an explanation of the nature and the working of his genius we found a reference to his ancestry unsatisfactory and an examination of his physical and mental environment scarcely less so, we are on totally different ground when dealing with the influence to be ascribed to his love affairs. To Goethe, the creative artist, these passionate experiences are of supreme importance. They are not mere incidents in his life. They furnish the emotional substratum of many of his works, and in any case they act as a powerful stimulant to his creative force. Whenever his poetic power begins to flag, it is revitalized by some fresh passion. An almost unbroken chain of such experiences stretches from 1770 right into an age when most men have ceased to play with fire, and it will occasionally happen that a new link is forged on while red hot, the link immediately preceding still radiating a very pleasant warmth. There is something so peculiar about Goethe's love affairs, their sudden beginning and just as sudden termination, the rapid transition from one love object to another and especially the dread, often amounting to positive panic, of irremediable entanglement that the question of the nature of his passionate experiences may be worth considering for a moment.

Why Goethe left Friederike Brion is a question that has been asked innumerable times, and a number of explanations have been offered, the most cogent being the reference to the imperative demand of his genius for freedom. This is in effect Goethe's own explanation, given many years after the event. Still, the victory of

the demand for freedom over genuine passion requires further explanation.

No one can read the accounts of Goethe's love affairs without becoming aware of the presence of an element which differentiates them from the love states of ordinary mortals: the predominance of the mental over the physical or sexual. To such an extent is this true that a great many, perhaps most of his love affairs, are hardly distinguishable from rapturous poetic friendships, such as were very common in Goethe's time, when men and women exchanged love letters for years without ever having seen each other. With Goethe it is not a case of platonic love, nor of what moralists would call a victory of the higher nature over gross passions. The explanation is to be found rather in the subordinate part played by the physical aspect of love which, no matter how hard we may try to veil it, is in normal individuals the real compelling factor in love. Often it is of such irresistible power that it makes people rush blindly into the wildest adventures, even marriage, that extreme form of the renunciation of freedom. Goethe in some cases actually contemplated marriage, but when the decisive moment arrived the motive presented by his predominantly mental passion was not powerful enough to overcome the opposition set up by his desire for freedom. If the physical aspect of his love had been more powerful, the story of his life would read differently. As it is, his passionate desire was never strong enough to make him fight for a woman, not even in the case of Lili Schönemann, yet his passion for her was probably the greatest of his life.

Goethe invariably ends an apparently irremediable situation by taking to flight. He does so in the case of Friederike, Charlotte Buff, Lili Schönemann and Frau

von Stein. No quarrel precedes the separation; Goethe just vanishes, sometimes without saying good-bye.

His relations with Frau von Stein seem to be a particularly telling proof of what has just been said. These relations began in 1776, a few days only after he had torn himself away from Lili Schönemann. Now the latter was physically highly attractive, but Goethe experiences no difficulty in transferring at a moment's notice his allegiance from Lili to Frau von Stein, seven years his senior, sickly, the mother of seven children and, according to those who knew her best, frigidity personified. Yet he remains her slave for ten years, writes her (although she only lives around the corner) over a thousand letters in which he addresses to her all the terms of affection to be found in a lover's vocabulary. The fact that she was the only possible woman for Goethe among the "toads and basilisks" of the Court as Goethe called them at a later period, the only one that could come within hailing distance of sensing the greatness of the man, may be accepted as one explanation of the duration of their relations, the other being the need Goethe always felt to have his heart touched by the love of a woman—a state which his sensitiveness and his poetic imagination would invariably magnify to a rapturous passion in which the physical aspect was only playing a very subordinate part.

Goethe was thirty-seven when he ran away from Frau von Stein to seek freedom in Italy. An extraordinary development took place there, extraordinary chiefly because it came so late in life. In Italy, for the first time, his senses awoke. Was it merely the reaction to the unduly protracted repression under the Stein régime or was it not rather one of the many abnormalities which make up Goethe?

The weakness of the physical urge has already been adduced in explanation of his peculiar conduct in his love affairs. It is certainly significant that before Italy he had for ten years been satisfied with the "sisterly" affection of Frau von Stein in a social environment which Schiller has described as far from squeamish. During the latter part of his stay in Italy he entered into a free relationship with an Italian woman. On his return, he openly took a vulgar little mistress in the person of Christiane Vulpius, in defiance of a horror-stricken Weimar society, which, however, only drew the line at a little flower maker and would have condoned almost any scandal with a lady of the Court.

Was this due to the vigour of the newly-awakened physical urge or the vigour of his contempt for Weimar?

After Italy, love ceases to be a languishing soul-mating. It now frankly finds happiness in possession, in calm enjoyment. The idealistic worshipper of the chilly Frau von Stein has become a realist in love and the Roman Elegies usurp the place of Iphigenie.

It may or may not be a mere coincidence that Goethe's father, too, waits until he is thirty-eight before getting married, although in accordance with Frankfurt custom a man of his means ought to have married ten or twelve years earlier. Curiously enough, in his case, too, an early love affair years before his marriage is enacted on the mental plane and becomes literature as shown by his reminiscences.

As with Goethe's love experiences, so care has to be taken in interpreting his assurance that all his works are "fragments of a great confession". Its biographical application and import are often far more limited than the older generation of Goethe biographers wish us to believe. It is not possible, as some one has suggested,

to write a biographical account of Goethe merely with the help of his poetic works. The result would be a lamentably attenuated form of biography. *Werther*, of course, is in a class by itself so far as embodying life experience is concerned. Nor can we accept without reserve Goethe's other dictum: that whenever he felt oppressed by an unpleasant experience he worked it off his heart by expressing it in poetic form. For example, Goethe goes through the painful experience of his relations with Friederike Brion. To rid himself of these torturing memories he introduces the episode of the faithless Weislingen and the gentle Maria in his *Götz von Berlichingen*. This seems plausible enough. But when we are asked to believe that whenever Goethe subsequently shows us scenes of faithlessness as in *Clavigo* and in *Faust* the poet's object is to rid himself of that same painful impression and that he writes from the very depths of a heart crushed by contrition, we may well ask: is it not possible that by that time the motif of a lover's faithlessness, though still rooted in the poet's experience, had assumed a purely artistic significance? In any case Clavigo has little in common with Goethe, the lover. The character of the man and the incidents were all furnished ready-made by Beaumarchais and are as unlike the incidents of Goethe's Sesenheim experience as possible. As for *Faust*, while the personality of the hero is of course infinitely more representative of the poet than was the case in *Clavigo*, the incidents, the whole trend of the tragic love story, are so different that a superhuman effort is required to find even the remotest analogy, let alone resemblance. *Tasso*, although the play does not contain a single incident of Goethe's life, is yet the most perfect self-revelation of Goethe, from beginning to end, more consistent than *Werther*

which in its closing chapters gives us a man such as Goethe not only was not but such as he could not possibly be.

We get Goethe's "fragments of a great confession" with far greater clearness in his lyric poems. There he is enjoying perfect freedom unhampered by the presence of other *dramatis personae* with their inevitable reactions on the central figure with its Goethean background. There he can be himself, but we must not forget that the slightest emotional disturbance awakens the poet and we can never be sure to what extent the actual experience has been sublimated by the poet's imagination. The only thing we can be sure of is that his emotional creations are not due to "nachempfindung", not due to reminiscences of the feelings of others, but originated in his own heart. We never even have with him the impression that he plagiarizes himself as Heine so often does. Indeed, when he lays aside unfinished any work, be it a drama or a lyric poem, he seems incapable of resuming until a fresh emotional impulse has been supplied by actual experience. We remind the reader of the genesis of *Egmont* and particularly of *Faust*. In the latter case a whole lifetime is only just sufficient to supply what impulse is needed.

Goethe has left behind him an incredible number of fragments, sketches and plans. We have from his pen no fewer than 117 dramatic writings, from finished works to mere sketches, of the former, of course, disproportionately few. This shows not merely that the indispensable stimulus often stayed away for good but perhaps also that his industry and self-control were disproportionate to the number of ideas that might have been wrought into finished products. What Chamberlain calls the "ausgesprochen weibliche Element" in Goethe

may be responsible for the fact that so much of Goethe's work is unfinished. This feminine element, Chamberlain holds, manifested itself in his capriciousness, his aimless ways, the sudden changes of mood and the want of sustained application which he only overcame in Weimar "when he was so loaded with work that he no longer found the leisure to waste time".

His purest poetical period was his last stay in Frankfurt. The years from 1773 to 1775 were the *anni mirabiles* of Goethe, the poet's, work. They were from the twenty-fourth to the twenty-sixth years of his life. Two years before he had, with the exception of a few love poems, not a single work, however short, to his credit, and now he writes or plans most of the great work on which his fame is based: *Werther*, *Götz* and *Clavigo* (the latter written in ten days). He writes a great portion of the first part of *Faust*, I might say the best part, the part containing the human tragedy, so much more appealing to some of us than the part he writes in Weimar, all "sickled o'er with the pale cast of thought" as indeed is everything he writes during the second half of his life. Let us not forget another work belonging to this time, at least the first conception of it, his ever youthful *Egmont* so dear to the heart of every German theatre-goer. There have been many ups and downs in the history of Goethe appreciation. The works of these two or three years have enjoyed a charmed existence and were never touched by popular disfavour, even in the twenties and thirties of last century when his Excellency, Herr Geheimrat von Goethe, the "Fürstenknecht" as some called him, had roused the ire of liberal Germany by his reactionary outlook on politics. Obviously during these few years from 1773-75 his craving for self-realization and self-development was satisfied

by poetic activity. It is significant that this should be the period enclosed between the two most passionately emotional experiences of his life, his love for Charlotte Buff and for Lili Schönemann.

It is a common experience that a lyric poet gives us the best of his work before he reaches the age of thirty. After that age there comes very often a period with only occasional poetic intervals. It is interesting to note that to the last four years of the fertile thirty we owe *Iphigenie*, *Wilhelm Meisters Theatralische Sendung* and the first conception of *Tasso*, and that the arid influence of Weimar does not make itself fully felt until after Goethe is thirty. During the remainder of the ten years of the first Weimar period the lack of poetic creation is probably due to some extent to the weakness of the poetic urge, the concomitant of the age he had reached. Heine, too, becomes a prose writer at the age of thirty. Frau von Stein's influence on the few poetic moments of that time, however ennobling, must at the same time have been retarding and narrowing. The woman who could speak of Klärchen as "eine Dirne" was no fit adviser for a young poet.

Biographers have often insisted on the beneficial results of the years during which Goethe toyed with statesmanship. We are told that this experience cured him of his loafing habits, taught him the necessity of continuity of effort and the importance of detail. It did a great deal more than that. It taught him to use his reason rather than his imagination, it taught him to control his sensitiveness, and to keep his personality in the background, in other words to repress his artistic temperament. All this was an admirable preparation for scientific work, but mental habits acquired as the result of such training could only be inimical to poetic

creation. When once his mind was cast in that mould, the only chance for poetic productivity lay in the occurrence of violent emotional disturbances or the powerful influences exercised in favour of a return to poetry by a strong personality such as Schiller. Unfortunately for those partial to poetry rather than to science, Schiller came too late, and long before his friend's death Goethe had returned to his *Farbenlehre*.

While Goethe's love for Christiane gives us significantly enough no higher sublimation of his experience than the *Roman Elegies*, his passion for Minna Herzlieb in 1807 is immediately followed by renewed interest in poetry, as shown by the publication of the first part of *Faust*, of *Pandora* and the *Wahlverwandschaften*, his love for Marianne Willemer by the *Suleika-Lieder*, and when as late as 1823, barely nine years before his death, Ulrike von Levetzow again makes his heart beat vehemently, Goethe bids farewell to Eros in his beautiful *Marienbader Elegie*, the swansong of the lyric poet. Apart from these love episodes there is, with the exception of Schiller's death, no event or experience in the second part of Goethe's life with which any poetic creation could be linked up. The deaths of Christiane, Frau von Stein, Karl August, the profound impression made by Napoleon, the stirring events of the War of Liberation, while not leaving Goethe, the man, untouched, leave the poet unmoved. They are experiences which Goethe, the sage, adds to his store of "lebenserfahrung" and on which among hundreds of others he bases his wisdom. Unfortunately for those who insist on Goethe, the poet, first and last, wisdom and poetic illusion are antagonistic. So as Goethe grows older we see wisdom gradually crowding out poetry. The process begins with *Wilhelm Meister's Lehrjahre* and is very

obvious to those who compare the work with the more youthful and poetic initial version, the *Theatralische Sendung*. The change is complete in the *Wanderjahre*, in which wisdom sits enthroned, and the creative artist is relegated to the humble function of providing occasional relaxation and entertainment. His *Wahlverwandtschaften*, too, with its reflective treatment of love and marriage problems, its undercurrent of a chemical allegory, and shadowy and almost abstract characters, show us the loss of creative power.

This tendency to weave an allegorical action around bloodless, shadowy figures is carried to its highest pitch in the second part of *Faust*. Not that poetic illusion does not on occasion carry off the victory over wisdom and purely abstract imaginings, but, on the whole, we rarely get a respite from the often laboured symbolism. With a feeling of joyful relief we greet in the last scenes the reincarnation of something like the Faust of the first part, divested of all his allegorical trappings, his supernatural powers and his often aimless endeavour, a mere man like ourselves whose doings and destiny we can watch with genuine human sympathy. Even Mephisto, who had long ceased to interest us, seems to take a new lease of life and to remember his diabolical purpose and functions. Dramatically, the last act is worth all the others taken together.

What think ye of Goethe? is a question which no one can face without embarrassment. The trouble is he towers so high above his surroundings, the field of his activities is so vast, his achievements so varied, the whole man so phenomenal, so unique that we find ourselves without a standard whereby to measure his greatness. We have seen that his ancestry and his environment acted rather as a handicap than as an ad-

vantage. He had no predecessors in his literary work, no models he could follow. He owes everything to himself. Lyric poet, dramatist, novelist, artist, scientist, statesman, philosopher, man! The amplitude of vision of a Goethe alone could hope even to survey such vastness.

What puzzles most people is the astonishingly small number of really first class works he has produced in spite of his incomparable greatness. Few will grudge him the first place in the lyric, but many experience difficulty in placing him as a dramatic artist. He has in the opinion of some, including the present writer, written one play which is well nigh perfect in structure, plot and language—*Iphigenie*, an inexhaustible source of pure delight. The remainder of his plays do not conform to laws held to be essential in dramatic composition. Yet one of them, *Faust*, has become the most famous dramatic poem in world literature. Others like *Götz* and *Egmont*, though they have never crossed the frontiers of Germany, are so wonderfully colourful and contain so many perfect scenes and interesting characters that they are assured of continued popularity among Germans for many years to come. Of the novels, *Wilhelm Meisters Lehrjahre* can fairly lay claim to immortality, not on account of the narrative, but because of the canvas crowded with characters like Wilhelm, Mignon, the Harper and Philine. With regard to *Werther*, it is hard to believe that its emotional sincerity will ever cease to grip the reader.

The defects of his works may be ascribed not merely to his incurable vice of procrastination, which rendered artistic unity difficult if not impossible, but also to the fact that he seemed incapable of planning or, at all events, representing an action of any size at all. His disinclination to face tragic issues also spoilt at least two of his plays.

Goethe's wisdom, which abounds in his works, especially in those of the last thirty years, is one of the most characteristic features of the man. It is, of course, drawn from Goethe's own experience of life and reveals more clearly than his poetic works his extraordinary personality, the universality of his interests and the wonderful mental balance he acquired in the course of his long life. Not all of it is likely to win popular favour in our own time. The reformer will look askance at his "fatalistic optimism", the rebel (and we are all rebels nowadays) will spurn his advice to accept our lives as they are given us and patiently wait for improvements to come about; nor can the denial of the existence of evil, no matter how true in metaphysics, be accepted as a working faith of everyday life.

There is one tenet of his wisdom, however, which is not likely ever to become obsolete—his insistence on the extreme value of personality. In the midst of our mania for standardization, Goethe stands out as a splendid ideal for those who care to live their own lives because they are convinced that in that way alone they can give the world the best that is in them.

GOETHE'S PLACE IN THE HISTORY OF SCIENCE*

G. S. Brett

GOETHE was aware that his age was an age of specialists who were not likely to accept as science the opinions of a poet, though they frequently accepted as poetry the metrical compositions of scientists. For this reason he gave an account of his work in a history of his botanical studies, asserting that he had devoted himself "seriously through many years to the study of the physical and physiological phenomena of nature, observing them with the perseverance which passion alone can give". This is unadulterated truth, but even this candid statement has not sufficed to reconcile the average mind to a belief in the possible union of such extremes as poetry and science. The historian of literature approaches Goethe's scientific writings with some misgiving and treats them as though they needed some apology. The historian of science, if he is honest, cannot overlook Goethe; but the history of science is still an undeveloped branch of literature and is dominated by the belief that what is now superseded has very little intrinsic value. Between these two attitudes, both limited and consequently prejudiced, there is a middle path which the circumstances indicate, and the first necessity is to define the special conditions which make intelligible the synthesis of poetry and science in the personality of Goethe.

Words, which should be our servants, are too often our masters. In this case the word science is itself a subtle cause of error. It suggests that hard and fast

*A lecture delivered in the University of Toronto during the Centenary Celebrations of the life and work of Goethe, March 1932.

distinction between fact and hypothesis, between reality and imagination, which has never been wholly true of the greatest thinkers in any field. It is a word peculiarly unsuited to the age of Goethe which, in fact, expressed its own ideal in the more comprehensive term Wissenschaft. If the practical mind of the English and the precise intellect of the French offer no obstruction to the use of the word science, the history of German thought makes it necessary to find a different symbol for its attitude toward the universe of experience. The current of German education and the organization of its universities were responsible for that unity of nature and mind which exercised a subtle and pervasive influence during the period in which Germany evolved its own peculiar culture. The distinction between science and Wissenschaft is neither trivial nor pedantic: it is indispensable for understanding the qualities, good and bad, which marked the age dominated by Naturphilosophie.

An old tradition has been preserved in some British universities by calling the professorship of physics a chair of natural philosophy. But even this echo from the distant past does not sound like that philosophy of nature which for half a century was the fine flower of the German intellect. Without some comprehension of the peculiar character of this mode of thought it is not possible to understand either Goethe or any of his most significant contemporaries: it is best, therefore, to face the problem at once.

To begin with the background of the scene, we may recall the fact that the eighteenth century was in many ways the sunset of the middle ages. The break-up of the mediaeval empire, political, ecclesiastical and educational, was slow and very unevenly accomplished. The main themes, political nationalism and personal indi-

vidualism, were worked out by different countries at different times. Italy and France and England made their bid for supremacy in turn and finally settled down to occupy a recognized place in the procession of history. As was fitting, Italy appropriated the revival of learning and restored the lost culture of pagan Rome. It also achieved a task even more important, though less appreciated, by fostering the new sciences which Leonardo da Vinci and Galileo virtually created. The work of Galileo was carried on by Newton in England and by the French mathematicians of whom, for the present, we need mention only Descartes. When we turn from these brightly lighted centres of learning and look at Germany we seem to see chiefly mist and forest. It is true that the academies of Italy and France, and the Royal Society of Great Britain were supplemented in 1700 by the foundation of the Berlin Academy, but in spite of its name its composition was chiefly French, its official language was French or Latin, and it relied upon Voltaire to preserve it from Teutonic stolidity. To compare Newton or Descartes with Luther may seem absurd, but Luther was the voice of Germany and he was the true spokesman of his country. Next to him, after a long interval, comes Leibniz from whom the historians of Germany delight to begin the annals of their intellectual life. Here indeed was a colossal figure, the equal of Newton and Descartes in mathematics, a classical scholar, a prophet of evolution with his *Protogaea* and a forerunner of German philosophy with his insistence on the obscure impenetrability of the inner life. But Leibniz only points the moral, for he wrote in Latin and French but not in German and he was still a scholar of the mediaeval times because he belonged more to the international world of learning than to any one country.

When Leibniz died in 1716 Germany was still nearly half a century away from its enlightenment and when it began its era of great achievements it moved forward on new and distinctive lines. Before the nineteenth century the physical sciences held no important place: law, philology, folklore, physiology and evolution were the major themes: in short the life of man and the nature of man took precedence over the exact or mechanistic sciences. In physiology Haller was an autocrat who did not disdain to combine science with poetry: with his dogmatic assertion of preformation he temporarily obscured the true doctrine of evolution as taught by Caspar Frederic Wolff. Herder's conception of a universal history of mankind was the germ of the historical sciences in which his country was destined to become the leader: but at the time even more importance was attached to the dispute over the origin of the Homeric poems, a topic which in the hands of F. A. Wolf was the instrument for the foundation of a whole science of antiquity and that branch of knowledge called philology.

This was the age and the intellectual atmosphere into which Goethe was born, A.D. 1749. His father had been a student of law, a man of cultivated taste who had made the tour to Italy and cherished the true German's ambition to be an official. Life in Frankfurt was unusually brisk during the first ten years of Goethe's life; but the excitement was furnished by the French, by French soldiers and French actors. At 16 we find Goethe moved to Leipzig and attending the University which is said to have been dull and scholastic: even in 1820 Fechner could say that after seven years in the medical school at Leipzig he had not learned how to put on a bandage! Goethe relieved the monotony by cultivating his interest in art and taking lessons in drawing.

A serious illness interrupted the course of events and in the lull of social excitement the young man, having in the midst of life looked on death, took an interest in occult wisdom, alchemy, astrology and other forms of natural magic. Another move then brought Goethe to Strasbourg. Leipzig, which was in Germany, was intellectually French: Strasbourg, which was not in Germany, was intellectually, or at least spiritually, German. Though technically a student of law Goethe devoted much of his time to the study of the medical sciences, anatomy, physiology and chemistry. But the chief importance of Strasbourg was centred in the personality of Herder, the apostle of the primitive cultures, of folk song and of the timeless art woven in that garment of Deity called History. The student years then came to an end: the young man returned to Frankfurt, ostensibly to be like his father, a respectable official with a respectable knowledge of law. But the daemonic force was still at work: storm and stress were rampant: the Urfaust was in the making: until in 1775 Goethe settled in Weimar, to be at the age of twenty-six a minister of state with new duties which involved some knowledge of mining, metallurgy, horticulture and what Mrs. Malaprop would have called "the contagious subjects". So the highroad of poetry and politics brought Goethe to the practical sciences.

These remarks are not intended to be a biography of Goethe: they are simply the shortest and most relevant way of explaining what science meant to Goethe; for poetry and law were sciences of the mind, as botany and anatomy were sciences of the body, and spirit and body were one Living Nature, a Divine Being to be grasped, as the theologians said, without confounding the attributes or dividing the substance. This was the

nature-philosophy which Germany created, the worship of a colossal embodiment of life, such as Faust looked upon with dread because the bloodless pages of his books had given him only the formulae and not the living experience. The revolt of Faust was not only the revolt of German youth casting off the bondage of empty phrases, it was the revolt of the new age against the mechanistic philosophy which had slowly developed during the eighteenth century and now lay on the spirit of man "heavy as frost and deep almost as life".

It is not by accident that Faust speaks so bitterly of theology; part of the world was still discussing the right definition of religion, part had gone over to that thinly varnished religion of the exact sciences called Deism; but Goethe was headed for the religion of the Bacchants, the "enthusiasm" rejected by the formalists and sceptics, the fullness of life which must needs believe the romantic gospel of Pantheism. To this day the translators of books on theology and philosophy are perplexed by such a word as *beseelt;* it can be paraphrased or evaded, but not translated. In spite of our Teutonic affinities we are more akin to Newton than Goethe; for the same reason we are more akin to modern Germany with its technological excellence than to the Germany of Goethe's day. After their humiliation at the hands of Napoleon the Germans turned to knowledge because it was power and power was the secret of liberation. But Faust did not find satisfaction in mathematics or chemistry, in books or laboratories. The deepest need of his spirit was to be at home in the world, to know its friendliness, to feel the unbroken unity of nature and man. This was the ever recurring theme of the nature-philosophy. It is not enough to know that the plant lives in the sun and that its life is a sequence of photo-chemical events:

we must also realize that the sun lives in the plant, that it achieves the fullness of its life just there where the sap is running and the flower unfolding: we must give up the idea that nature is a shell within which must be found the geometrical structure, the mathematical essence, the scientific kernel of reality. "Natur hat weder Kern noch Schale." There is no hidden mystery of life: there is no dream from which we should awaken: there is no appearance which shrouds reality. To know life we need only to live; Goethe and Kant and all the Germans of their time had arrived at this same conclusion and their keywords are experience, act, and the life of the spirit.

Many years ago Professor van der Smissen, whose name is honoured in the history of this University of Toronto and in the history of German scholarship, after an address which I had given on the mechanistic philosophy of the 18th century, copied out and sent me the words in which Goethe expressed the horror which that philosophy inflicted on him and the joyful relief which he felt when he learned that Nature was not merely a soulless mechanism. It is hard to appreciate that crisis at this distance of time, but I think it can be understood by us to-day if for Goethe we substitute Tennyson and for the Newtonian tradition of 1780 the equally distorted Darwinism of the middle 19th century, and then recall how popular feeling responded to every assurance that "nature red in tooth and claw" was a partial truth, an abstract view, because in fact moral freedom transcends natural law and faith supplements reason.

Needless to say the analogy cannot be carried much further. Goethe did not take refuge in pietism, unless some one wishes to argue that the second part of Faust ought to be so interpreted. But, as we now wish to

point out emphatically, Goethe did proceed to take up scientific work with a strong prejudice against everything that looked as cold and colourless as the differential calculus. Goethe came to science from the side of the classics in the German sense, that classical philological section still preserved by the German academies of learning. He had no taste for mathematics, and that is really a paradox. For pure mathematics is a form of mysticism, a world of intuitions shaped into aesthetic harmonies, the disembodied mind of nature known only to such kindred spirits as Newton or Leibniz, and to those contemporaries of Goethe, Euler and Gauss, Laplace or Lagrange. But the paradox is the fact that Goethe counted himself a realist. He found Kant, who was a physicist and a mathematician, distasteful: though he certainly picked up many crumbs from that overloaded table and was thankful for what the all-shattering criticism had done to break the doctrine of scientific necessity. He evaded Kant, though he did not fling him away in the manner of Herbert Spencer. He preferred Schelling, whose strong point was certainly not criticism, because here he found support for his own belief in objective mind. Yet Goethe was not an idealist in the more exact sense of that term. His world is never a world of concepts, of mental acts transposed into space, a transcendent psychology. When he expressed himself at all on the question he preferred to speak of Platonic ideas, meaning by that term the principles of order which reveal a plan and a purpose in nature, a comfortable belief that the universe is friendly and that in nature man can truly be at home.

Goethe seems to have felt that there was something peculiar in this attitude which called for explanation. He turns from poetry and drama to write on geology

and reflects that people will think it a strange contradiction to show interest in both the warm hearts of men (including women) and the flinty heart of rocks. Since this is one of his most explicit utterances on the point and is also an actual part of Goethe's scientific work, it seems worth while to quote in full the passage from the essay on granite.

"I do not fear the reproach that it must be a spirit of contradiction that has led me from the observation and painting of the human heart, the innermost, most varied, mobile, changeable and fragile thing in creation, to commenting on the oldest, deepest, and most unbreakable offspring of nature. For it will readily be admitted that everything in nature stands in definite relationship, and that the researching spirit will not willingly shut itself off from anything accessible. It may even be granted to me, who through the change of human feelings and their movements have suffered and still suffer much within myself and in others, to enjoy the sublime calm which is offered by the solitary still nearness of vast and whispering nature: and let any one who has an inkling of it follow me."

Perhaps Goethe did not fully comprehend how much conflict there was in his own nature between emotionalism and realism. But it is time to leave generalizations and come to the details of Goethe's scientific work. After the first direct contact with practical science in 1775, poetry and travel and experimental love-affairs and war filled the next fifteen years. In 1790 we find Goethe back in Weimar, combining in true German fashion the interests of a narrow and limited provincial life with cosmopolitan lack of patriotism and superb indifference to Napoleonic ambitions. When Napoleon and Goethe

met it was a meeting of the gods, for each belonged to a universe of his own and dwelt apart in his own star. In Weimar Goethe found two interests: he became director of the theatre and a student of science. The theatre was not a new field of activity: comparatively speaking science was new ground, but in fact it was not wholly new for two reasons: first, that Goethe regarded it as a philosophical activity, and (second) that he had begun to formulate his ideas in 1782. It will be convenient here to enumerate the more important parts of his work in chronological order. In 1782 an article *Die Natur* was published in a journal, to which Goethe added a further elucidation in 1828. A fragment *Ueber den Granit* was written in 1784, to which also additions were made later, but these remained in manuscript. In 1790 appeared the major work *Metamorphose der Pflanzen*, and to the same year belongs a MS. fragment *Versuch ueber die Gestalt der Tiere*. In 1791 and 1792 the Contributions to Optics were published, and in 1795 the important Introduction to Comparative Anatomy. The theory of *Bildung und Umbildung organischer Naturen* was worked out in 1807 and from that time onward the greater part of the work done belongs to the field of morphology or to comparative anatomy. The work which Goethe himself valued most highly was the *Farbenlehre*, the theory of colours, of which the first part appeared in 1810. About 1820 we find Goethe dealing with the Formation of large inorganic Masses and the Formation of Mountains (1824). Among his latest works comes the treatise on meteorology and cloud-formation (1825). Though nearing his eightieth year, Goethe seemed to have lost very little of his capacity to acquire and assimilate new material by which he might illustrate his dominant idea.

Goethe's method, which is also his philosophy of science, was formulated from the beginning: it was in fact an expression of his own nature, which he assumed to be also the way in which nature in general expressed itself. The world presents itself to us as a vast collection of independent things. But they fall naturally into classes and the objective reason for this is that they are all reproductions of a few types or forms. To make the world intelligible, to make ourselves at home in it, we must learn to recognize the types and along with the type the laws of transformation which automatically explain the variety. In recent German thought one of the most distinctive characteristics has been the emphasis on Form, Gestalt: it seems to be a tendency inherent in the German mind: and in the light of these movements a special significance may be attached to Goethe's persistent use of that word. It is, in any case the clue to all studies of organic evolution, and this was the part of science on which Goethe left his mark.

At the time when Goethe did his most significant work France was leading the world in science. In the mathematical sciences Goethe took little interest and no active part. Neither did many other great men, for the age of mechanics and physics was becoming also an age of botany, zoology, physiology and that combination of sciences which was later called biology. If the work of Newton was great, so also was the work of Dalton whose atomic theory put chemistry in the very place where Goethe would have been pleased to see it, though he seems to have had no personal interest in chemistry. Next to chemistry came zoology, where the names of Cuvier, Buffon and St. Hilaire attracted universal attention. Evolution itself was hotly discussed and Lamarck above all others was an object of praise

and censure in fairly equal proportions. In Caspar Wolf Germany had the best exponent, but this prophet was not honoured either in his own country or outside it. Many other names could be quoted to prove our point, which is that Goethe was very much in the fashion of his times, that he was all the more akin to the movement because he kept away from the actual German tendency toward abstract ideas and neglect of observation, that he was well acquainted with the science of his day and kept in touch more particularly with the French school. Without further insistence on this point we may go on to consider his personal achievements.

About 1795 Goethe evolved the general idea of morphology. He defined the central idea of a dynamic or genetic process. It can be applied to everything, because everything goes through some series of changes. It can be applied, for example, to the wall of a town, for we can trace in it the different styles or kinds of material which mark different stages of its growth. In natural objects it is obvious that the principle is the same, for elementary forms are very much alike and their differences emerge as they develop by assimilation and the formation of special organs adapted to their special needs or environments. There is no ultimate single form, except in the general concept of a First Matter (Urwesen), which is practically useless. But there is a primary plant (the Urpflanze), a primary man (the Urmensch), in short in every real class there is an Urphänomen. This theory was most completely elaborated in the treatise on the metamorphosis of plants. The unit of structure in this class Goethe called *Blatt*, the leaf. But the word must be understood in terms of the general explanation. All parts of the plant are repetitions and modifications of one structural pattern:

the growth begins from the swelling and expansion of the seed and the seed-leaves: the stem puts out new leaves by assimilating material from the air, first compressed and then expanded: the flower is due to the same process repeated. Goethe seems to have believed that it was possible to find still on earth the original primitive plant; but in spite of laborious search he had no success and finally relegated it to the world of ideal types known only to nature but unfailingly manifested through the ages.

This brief statement does less than justice to Goethe's industry and scientific caution. His interest in botany began in 1776 when horticulture was one of his duties as minister in Weimar. At first it was an aesthetic interest but with time it grew into a curiosity which demanded knowledge. Linnaeus was then the great botanist and to his works Goethe turned for information. He states, more than once, that the three men who most influenced his development were Shakespeare, Spinoza and Linnaeus. To Linnaeus he probably owed the word metamorphosis, an unfortunate debt since it was used by both writers in an unusual way. But his final comment is "Linné taught me an infinite amount, but not botany". The study of Linné was long and faithful, but Goethe discovered that it ended only in a system, a well ordered collection of names: he complained that Linné gave no organic unity to his system, had no central idea, and no dynamic principle. His own view, he claimed, was a real insight into a principle of life: and this principle he tested by observation in Padua, in Palermo, in every place where some significant specimen could be found.

The discovery of the inter-maxillary bone in man has a similar history. Goethe had only incidental dealings

with science as a student: he was a self made man in so far as he followed his own interests, though when interested he chose the best authorities and toiled manfully to acquire all that they could teach. Like many other people he took a superficial interest in the superficial work of Lavater, the study of physiognomy. But here again he was annoyed to find a chaos of material and no unifying principle. He believed, as a first principle, that there is no outer without an inner. Expression must be due largely to the underlying bones and their connections. This meant a study of anatomy, so to the anatomist he went and in due course mastered the teaching of the contemporary anatomists. Having learned his anatomy from Loder he put it to good use by teaching the art students at Weimar the structure of the human body. This reminds us inevitably of Leonardo da Vinci who also went from the draughtsman's view of the outer visible form to the anatomist's knowledge of the inner framework and wedded art to science with profit to both. But the study of bones began to work on Goethe's mind and raise further speculations. It might well be that all men were variations of one original skeletal form, an Urmensch. It might also be true that all skeletal forms arose from one original animal, still further back, the Urtier! One thing stood distinctly in the way, and it is worth remarking that Goethe did not ignore it or attempt to override it dogmatically. The obstruction was the statement in the books that man differs from the ape and all other vertebrate animals in not possessing the inter-maxillary bone. This he could not accept without a struggle: it meant that nature failed to maintain the type. Assisted by his maxim that in nature some things are more expanded and some more contracted, that some become more obvious and some

more concealed, Goethe persisted in the search. As the inter-maxillary bone in the lower forms was the base of the incisor teeth it should still be found where those teeth are found. On the 27th of March 1784 he found it and wrote to Herder "I have found—not gold nor silver, but what gives me unspeakable joy, the Os intermaxillare in man!"

This was not only a discovery but a victory for the cause of morphology in general. He borrowed from Sömmering the skull of an elephant and studied it. "From the turtle to the elephant" he exclaims, "what a gap there is, yet a whole series of forms binds them together". The vista opens wide, and Goethe begins to think of some primitive element which might explain all forms. He decided that the solution was to be found in the parts of the vertebral column. The vertebra, like the leaf of the plant, is not to be taken too exactly: in the vertebral column it is a highly developed unit, but we are to suppose that in the most primitive form it was different but none the less expressed the principle of structure which now constitutes the character of the animal world. As the spinal column has evolved from simpler structures, so the skull has been formed by the same process from the same beginning, which he thought was shown by the arrangement of its parts and their joints or sutures. Further evidence for a general ground plan of all animal forms was found in the obvious parallels of the fin, the wing, the web-foot and the peculiar structure of the bat. Thus did Goethe intuitively grasp the essentials of general morphology and inductively establish his hypothesis. As he rightly says, one case may suggest to genius the solution of all cases but the greatest variety of cases is needed to make it worthy of belief.

The task of surveying all nature was beyond any

man's powers and Goethe now turned to his favourite subject, the theory of colours. On this he laboured for many years and he initiated into his method and theory Schopenhauer, a philosopher who also wrote a treatise on colour. The work of Goethe was published under the title *Farbenlehre* in three parts, the didactic, the historical and the polemical. The polemics have been recognized as futile and are usually ignored. We cannot pass over this unfortunate outburst in silence because it demonstrates a point of biographical interest. Goethe denounced Newton's work as "a deserted piece of antiquity": he seems to have felt that Newton had laid sacrilegious hands on the divinity of light. Newton did in fact do two things wholly repugnant to Goethe's nature: he destroyed unity where Goethe wanted to keep it, and he employed a method of physical analysis which Goethe probably could not, and certainly would not, understand. This aberration of genius need not be exaggerated. Goethe was always launching out on new ventures and the concepts of electricity proved as intriguing and as misleading to him as they did to many others. Polarity became the fashion: all nature was polarized and everything had a tendency to oscillate between positive and negative poles. Goethe went a little way on this path, picked up some information about attraction, translated the idea into elective affinities and finally used it up as the formula for that inevitable attraction which provides the theme of most novels. In his treatment of light Goethe was still obsessed by this notion of polarity. With no idea of physical analysis he asserted that light and dark were the two fundamental facts and that colour was the product of these two. The opinion was both groundless and useless, so that it needs no more discussion.

But if Goethe was wrong about the physical nature of light and colours, he had many things left about which he could be right. He was right in saying that the experiences relating to light and colour had been neglected. He was in fact in the tradition of Aristotle and Leonardo da Vinci, though he refers to Theophrastus and Boyle. His interest was all-embracing: his treatise, which had been preceded by essays on optics, comprehended physiological, pathological, physical, dioptric, and chemical colours. His grasp of the problems which arise out of the general conditions of experience was great, and he applied himself diligently to study abnormal cases, relativity of effects, colour contrasts and many other practical points. In such a technical field as this it is comforting to be able to quote a great authority. Wilhelm Ostwald, doctor of science in the universities of Cambridge, Aberdeen, Liverpool and Toronto, Nobel Prizeman 1909, says in a recent book on colours: "the development of physiology since the middle of the century has exercised a powerful influence on our knowledge. This development was ushered in by Goethe's endeavours to create a complete doctrine of colours. He rightly challenged the previous conception of the physicist, suggested by Newton's fundamental discoveries, that colour theory belonged to physics, and emphasised the part played by chemistry and, in particular by physiology, in this science. The co-operation of the eye and its associated organs in the origin of colour were insisted upon in the most forcible manner, and he thereby rendered a service never to be forgotten". Ostwald goes on to explain the several errors which Goethe made, but I imagine that the shades of Goethe in their centenary year will be content to accept that high commendation.

Two more of Goethe's interests should be mentioned, both developed late in his career. One was geology in which he showed a good sense for the genesis of forms and for stratification, with a tendency to discover the basic principle in crystallization as the Urform of solids. The second was meteorology. As a result of Goethe's suggestion an observatory was erected in Jena in 1813. As no meteorological stations existed it was customary to equip an observatory for this purpose. Goethe was relied on to suggest the necessary instruments and it is to his credit that he mentioned a barometer, a thermometer and a hygrometer. Goethe was always interested in the atmosphere: he regarded it as a garment of the earth! Naturally he found aesthetic pleasure in observing the phenomena of sun and storm and more than all, the formation and transformation of the clouds. But this seems to have had no element of scientific order until 1815 when Goethe learned about the work of Luke Howard, the Englishman. This man, a chemist by occupation, belongs to that long list of devoted amateurs who love nature and have an instinct for observation. Howard worked out the classification into cirrus, cumulus, stratus: thereby reducing the plurality of clouds to the unity of three forms. Could anything be more acceptable to Goethe? He overflowed with enthusiasm and Howard wrote him an account of his life and work. For Goethe this was an inspiration to start once more the study of transformation, watching the clouds constantly to see how they divided and reunited, a new world of visible dynamic forms.

Our narrative, too long for the occasion and too short for its subject, must now be concluded. We set out to consider Goethe's place in the history of science. The great man makes his own place in history, and what it

was it remains. We pay our tribute to him when after a hundred years we still consider it worth while to hear again the story of his hopes and ambitions, his success and failures. Time deals lightly with the poet and the artist: they compete only with ideals and to succeed is to be immortal. But science is a cumulative product and the labour of a lifetime may be buried under a chance discovery or a technical improvement. Because Goethe served his age magnificently as a lover of nature and spent his energy lavishly to establish great ideas, he has earned the right to be remembered and honoured. The value of his work has been estimated very differently at different times and by different people according as the emphasis is laid on the special defects of his results or the importance of his intuitive insight into principles. One of the best and most significant statements of Goethe's merits was made by Helmholtz, a high authority on both the physical and physiological departments of science. Helmholtz delivered two addresses on Goethe, one in 1853 and another forty years later. In the first he attributes to Goethe two fundamental ideas accepted by later scientists: one was the idea that different animals are variations of an original common type, the other was the idea that a single organism is a repetition of similar parts modified in various ways. Helmholtz claims that Goethe applied to nature the method of the poet, for whom the central idea must come first and dominate the whole: so that "instead of trying to arrange the phenomena of nature under definite conceptions, he sits down to contemplate them as he would a work of art, complete in itself, and certain to yield up its central idea, sooner or later, to a sufficiently susceptible student". This is an acute judgment and goes far to explain why Goethe succeeded where insight was most important

and failed where experimental analysis was indispensable. The second address by Helmholtz was given in 1892. It begins with the admission that the earlier address was too much occupied in defending science against art: after years of experience Helmholtz had come to see that science needs creative synthesis of a kind not different from that of the artist. So far Goethe's attitude was really scientific. Having also had his own troubles, Helmholtz is inclined to be less antagonistic toward Goethe's view of colours. He points out that Newton's doctrine is not without difficulties when we consider the basic ideas of corpuscular motion and wave-motion, that Sir David Brewster did not avoid fallacies similar to those of Goethe, and that his own work on physiological optics has a relation to the subject on which Goethe laid his emphasis. Here perhaps the speaker, addressing a Goethe Society on the hallowed ground of Weimar, was rather too generous in his concessions. But it is significant that between these two addresses came the work of Darwin and that Helmholtz had been affected by the new spirit of evolution. For this reason he sees that in principle Goethe was right, though the real process of natural evolution had not been grasped by him and the hypothesis had remained without the necessary addition of the method. He sees, also, that the evolution of thought is itself a process with no small significance, that the great central ideas penetrate the life of successive generations and that the power of a creative thinker may be out of all proportion to the value of his single and separate achievements. To-day, in many ways, there is a need for closer relations between science and literature, for humanism in science as well as science in humanism. Teaching may achieve something: historians of science or the popularizing exponents

may help; but the greatest honour will finally go to men like Goethe who find in nature and experience neither division nor patchwork but one seamless garment.

GREEK COMEDY

W. D. Woodhead

IT is a striking example of the vitality of Greek genius that tragedies and comedies, which were composed for a single performance in the state theatre of the god, Dionysus, at Athens, are still read more than 2300 years after they were produced. We may look rather ruefully at the meagre remnants of that great theatrical period; and we realize in reading these how difficult it is to reconstruct in our imagination the scene of production —the open-air theatre with its throng of spectators in their picturesque attire, the costumes and masks of the performers, and above all the music and dancing which formed so important a part of the ceremonies. But we have at least the satisfaction of a glimpse at the kind of entertainment offered to the Athenian public in the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.: and Professor Norwood's scholarly volume[1] lifts the curtain and enables us to see more intimately that procession of ancient comic dramatists who gave their best to Athens during these two great centuries. It is a sane and thorough piece of work; and when one reads here and there, in text and footnotes, some of the extravagant theories to which he does not subscribe, one submits all the more readily to the services of so trustworthy a guide.

To most of us, naturally and inevitably, Greek Comedy is Aristophanes. The discovery of considerable fragments of Menander, it is true, divides our attention to a certain extent. But Menander is a cosmopolitan of the fourth century, and his plays and the Roman adaptations from his works and those of his contemporaries are connected in a direct line with the Comedy of Manners

[1] *Greek Comedy*. Gilbert Norwood. Methuen, 1931.

which is familiar to us all. We are naturally more attracted by the strange and unfamiliar, and captivated by the very variety of the elements which went to the making of the Old Comedy. Artistically there is all the difference in the world between the Old and the New Comedy, the work of Aristophanes and that of Menander. There is nothing in common between the polished elegance of Menander, his skilful handling of plots, the universality of his themes, and the boisterous, shapeless, comedy of Aristophanes, with its licence of personal invective, its Rabelaisian indecencies, its lyrical ecstasies. It is partly because of the genius of the man, partly because there is nothing in literature resembling his work, that we turn again and again to Aristophanes.

The peculiarities of the Old Comedy are the natural result of the political, religious, and social life of the Athenian city-state: and the history of Attic Comedy reflects more clearly than any form of literature the sequence of events in the history of Athens. The pride and glamour of the Periclean city, the undercurrent of misgiving as the Peloponnesian War drained the life-blood of the state, the hatred of the new class of demagogue politicians who corrupted the democracy, all find expression in the fragments and plays of fifth century Comedy. Criticism throughout this period was free to an extent unparalleled in the world's history, and the comic dramatist who, like most Greek writers, firmly believed in the poet's duty as a moral guide, could lash out at the successful popular leader with a violent invective which makes the reader gasp. Even the god at whose festival the ancient comedies were presented, the god who presided over tragedy and comedy alike, could be represented on the stage as a gross, cowardly, stupid creature, the butt of his own slave. The wrath of

Dionysus indeed was less to be feared than the revenge of the demagogue, Cleon, who made at any rate some attempt at retaliation upon the fierce attacks of Aristophanes. But what strikes the modern reader as the most curious feature of the situation is the ineffectiveness of such attacks. The delighted spectators awarded the first prize in 424 B.C. to *The Knights* of Aristophanes; and Cleon, the villain of the play, probably viewed the performance from a privileged position: but shortly after the popular verdict had rewarded Aristophanes with the coveted prize, the victim of the play was elected to the position of general. This may mean, of course, that the comic dramas were treated merely as extravagant farces, and that the spectators came to be amused rather than instructed. But there can be no doubt as to Aristophanes' feelings about Cleon. He is an unscrupulous demagogue, who has assumed the credit for a successful coup which was really the work of another. And so one cannot help wondering after all whether there is not some other explanation of this curious Athenian inconsistency, an inherent weakness in the Greek character, a lack of stability and a tendency to follow the last speaker provided that he is a skilful orator.[2] The subtle Athenian seems always to have been fascinated by the spell of words. That is why Aristophanes presents in *The Clouds* that vigorous contest between the Just and the Unjust Argument: that is why Euripides, too, spoils many of his tragedies by introducing lengthy and sophistical debates between his characters. Rhetoric had, in fact, begun its invasion of Greece in the latter half of the fifth century, and was to assume a rôle of ever greater importance, ultimately stifling the free and natural communication of

[2]The behaviour of Athens to Mytilene is a striking example of this tendency. Cf. Thucydides 3, 34-50.

ideas by a tyranny of highly artificial modes of expression.

The bitter years of disillusionment which followed the collapse of Athens in 404 are reflected in the comedy of the early fourth century. The high spirits, the boisterous fun of the early Aristophanes are but feebly kept alive in his last two extant plays. The city had passed through the valley of humiliation, and the licence of abuse which was granted in the fifth century is now no longer safe. Moreover the expense of equipping and training a chorus is proving too burdensome for the defeated city. The chorus had previously been the very heart of the play. It had served as a vehicle for the poet's thoughts and opinions, and no comedy had been complete without that strange Parabasis, in which the chorus made its impudent appeal to the judges on behalf of the dramatist. In the last of Aristophanes' extant plays the chorus has almost completely disappeared, a forlorn stage-direction in the MS. merely denoting that at such and such a point a choral song of some kind was sung by a chorus of we know not what character, as a mere irrelevant interlude in the comedy. The change is important, for it is the first step toward the comedy of manners which reached its fullest development at the end of the fourth century. The somewhat formless and plotless comic drama of the fifth century with its extravagant humour, its fantastic chorus, its lovely lyrics, was intensely personal. A product of fifth century Athens, it could hardly have existed in any other environment. And now, with the loss of the old chorus, the loss of licence to indulge in personalities, and above all the loss of faith in the destinies of Athens, comedy becomes impersonal. Subtlety in plot construction, the skilful handling of stock themes and characters, polished urbanity of diction, and a cosmopolitan outlook are the characteristics of the new comedy.

It might just as well have been acted in a parish hall as in the theatre sacred to Dionysus, for Dionysus mattered little to the sceptical, disillusioned Athenian now. Secularization so complete in the field of comedy is a reflection of the breakdown of the city-state religion. The Gods had failed to protect Athens against the Spartan and against the Macedonian, and it seemed as if Chance or Fortune were the capricious deity who directed human affairs. Men turned to philosophy, to the systems of Zeno and Epicurus, for the consolations which religion could no longer offer, and the poets of the new comedy are often vehicles for the doctrines of the philosophical schools. Poets they may still be called, for the conventions of Greek dramatic composition called for metrical productions: but the smooth, polished lines of Menander and his contemporaries and their simple, lucid diction, admirable as they are for the purpose which they serve, can hardly be thought of as poetry, unless we are ready to invent some entirely different title for the works of Aristophanes. And it is to Aristophanes and the playwrights of the old comedy that we must turn, it is of them that we think, when we speak of Greek Comedy.

The qualities of Aristophanes have never been more admirably described than by George Meredith in his *Essay on Comedy*: "He is not likely to be revived. He stands, like Shakespeare, an unapproachable. We may build up a conception of his powers if we mount Rabelais upon Hudibras, lift him with the songfulness of Shelley, give him a vein of Heinrich Heine, and cover him with the mantle of the Anti-Jacobin, adding (that there may be some Irish in him) a dash of Grattan, before he is in motion. This laughing bald-pate, as he calls himself, was a Titanic pamphleteer, using laughter for his political weapon, a laughter without scruple, the laughter of

Hercules. He was a lyrical poet of aerial delicacy, with the homely song of a jolly national poet, and a poet of such feeling that the comic mask is at times no broader than a cloth on the face to show the serious features of our common likeness. He is not to be revived: but if his method were studied, some of the fire in him would come to us and *we* might be revived."

Such a composite portrait is the only true method of describing our poet. Shakespeare's Falstaff indulges in the same riotously extravagant mirth: but if Shakespeare had been Aristophanes and had enjoyed the Old Comedy's licence of ridicule, Queen Elizabeth herself or Essex or Burleigh might have appeared in caricature in his plays. And Shakespeare's treatment of Falstaff, as Professor Norwood makes plain, is something entirely different from the method pursued by Aristophanes. The Greek poet was not interested in character study. Cleon, Lamachus, Socrates are Athenian worthies translated to the land of *Weissnichtwo* and built into a grotesque scheme which suits the fancy of a poet whose main interest lies in comic situation. The rich mythology of Greece is ransacked and the legends treated by the tragic poets are travestied by the comic dramatist with a fertility and audacity of imagination which convulse the reader. Bellerophon mounted upon Pegasus becomes a hardy Athenian soaring aloft upon a monstrous dung-beetle to rescue Peace from her imprisonment and restore her to Greece. The liberation of Mnesilochus from the infuriated women who have discovered his presence among them in female disguise is an uproarious and wildly indecent parody of a scene in Euripides' *Andromeda*. And the audience must have rocked with laughter as they recognized the solemn tragic rhythms bobbing up serenely in the middle of one of the most ludicrous scenes in Greek comedy.

Comic situation, then, is the method which Aristophanes chooses to tickle his audience. Plot-construction is for the most part primitive in the extreme. An Aristophanic comedy is a series of explosions; and as there was no material which the poet might not use, he might give full rein to his imagination. The Rabelaisian indecency of his work is part and parcel of the Athenian comic tradition; and, however much it may shock some modern readers, it never troubled an audience who knew that it was an inherited element in the worship of their god. Human conservatism does not readily let die the primitive survivals of bygone days, as the carnival and our own Hallowe'en still survive to prove. The God of Wine was symbolical of the reproductive powers of both the animal and the vegetable worlds, and the phallus song and the phallic emblem inevitably found their way into Greek Comedy as part of his ritual. Professor Norwood wisely remarks that to eliminate these elements in reading Aristophanes is from every point of view unjustifiable. "You may discover," he asserts, "in Aristophanes every kind of impropriety save one: cant." It is a misfortune, as he observes, that one of the poet's most brilliant plays, the *Thesmophoriazusae*, has never received the recognition which it deserves, just because of its frank impropriety. *The Clouds*, *The Knights*, *The Frogs*, and other comedies, in the expurgated editions of Dr. Merry, have delighted hosts of young scholars. But no "school" edition of the *Thesmophoriazusae* can ever be contemplated: it must be reserved for those readers who are ready to accept its indecencies and revel in its sparkling and exhilarating fun. *Lysistrata* as a play is far inferior, and though its successful run in New York has probably made it the best-known of all the author's plays, it would be a mistake to consider it in any way as typical of Aris-

tophanes' best work. *The Birds* could have been acted in California without any risk of an injunction against the author, and the audience would have witnessed the dramatist's admitted masterpiece. But this play is a pure phantasy, without political or moral significance, an exquisite Midsummernight's Dream in which Aristophanes succeeds for once in banishing all the cares and anxieties which he fails to conceal in most of his comedies. *Lysistrata* on the other hand is a curious compound: for though the central theme, a sex strike on the part of the women of Greece to bring an end to the war, offers opportunities for the most daring improprieties, the serious undercurrent of feeling is unmistakable. Professor Norwood in his interesting analysis of Aristophanes' qualities denies him the gift of pity, and describes him as "almost everywhere metallic, like W. S. Gilbert, who reveals no tenderness save when he sets himself, deliberately, to write a love-song, whose pathos is turned on mechanically. . ." It is when one reads *Lysistrata* that one sees the necessity for modifying this statement: and Professor Norwood himself slips into the word "tender" when he describes the play.

The fact is that Greek comic drama does not give much opportunity for the display of tenderness, and the Greeks in any case are sparing in the display of this and many other emotions. But it is hard to believe that they were strangers to it. The general absence of love-themes from Greek tragedy has been noted again and again by scholars, and the closing words of Pericles' great funeral oration, those cold, comfortless words with which he addresses the mothers and wives of the dead, are cited as an instance of indifference of feeling. That the Greeks felt differently from us, and that in addition to their reserve in expressing emotion and their avoidance of

sentimentality they lacked some gifts which we rightly prize, is undoubtedly true. Though they were probably, Mr. Earp says,[3] our superiors in activity and subtlety of intellect and other qualities, their range of feeling was narrow in comparison with ours. But at times even in Aristophanes tenderness and sympathy will manifest themselves. The intense hatred which he felt for the war might have been expressed in tragic scenes of butchery and cruelty, as in the *Trojan Women* of Euripides: but he is a comic dramatist and chooses rather to paint the delights of peace, the charm of the countryside and of the farmer's life on his small estate, and all the joys of which war deprived his city. It is in such pictures that Aristophanes is at his best, the lyric qualities of the poet shining out like jewels against the farcical extravagance of his dramatic scenes. His courage in attacking the war policy of Athens at a time when the city was in the throes of a war fever impresses the reader. In the *Acharnians* and *Peace* he lashes out unsparingly at the follies of his country and succeeds at the same time in producing two of his merriest and most entertaining comedies. But a deeper note is struck in *Lysistrata*. The play was performed after the failure of the Athenian expedition to Sicily, at a time when Athens was ringed with foes and engaged in the final struggle for her imperial existence. The wild hilarity of the sex-strike theme cannot mask the note of pessimism which makes itself heard: and in the middle of the play the poet suddenly allows Lysistrata to express something of what the women feel at the continuance of the war. Her dialogue with the magistrate is brief enough to quote:[4]

MAG.: Heard any ever the like of their impudence,

[3]The Way of the Greeks, p. 194.

[4]The translation is that of Rogers.

these who have nothing to do with the war!. . .

LYS.: Nothing to do with it, wretch that you are!
We are the people who feel it the keenliest,
doubly on us the affliction is cast;
Where are the sons that we sent to your battle-fields?

MAG.: Silence! a truce to the ills of the past.

LYS.: Then in the glory and grace of our womanhood,
all in the May and the morning of life,
Lo, we are sitting forlorn and disconsolate,
what has a soldier to do with a wife?
We might endure it, but ah! for the younger ones,
still in their maiden apartments they stay,
Waiting the husband that never approaches them,
watching the years that are gliding away.

MAG.: Men, I suppose, have their youth everlastingly.

LYS.: Nay, but it isn't the same with a man:
Grey though he be when he comes from the battle-field,
still if he wishes to marry he can.
Brief is the spring and the flower of our womanhood,
once let it slip, and it comes not again;
Sit as we may with our spells and our auguries,
never a husband will marry us then.

Here is true feeling, not "pathos turned on mechanically"; and if we desire further proof that Aristophanes was something more than a brilliant but metallic wit, we need look only at the contrast between his great fifth-century plays and the two extant examples of his craft after the collapse and humiliation of Athens. The *Ecclesiazusae*, as Professor Norwood himself remarks, is the work of a broken-hearted man. The poet had fought manfully against war. He had attacked the imperialistic ambitions

of Athens even at a time when her policy gave some promise of success. After the terrible failure in Sicily, when a lesser man might have whined "I told you so", he rallies to his country, and the choruses of men and women in *Lysistrata*, at last reconciled, exclaim: "Gentlemen, we are not preparing to utter a single ill word against any citizen: no, our intent is to say and do all the good we can, for the troubles already on our hands are enough." But the defeat of Athens is the death-blow: and we could wish that Aristophanes, like Sophocles and Euripides, had been spared the sight of that final tragedy.

Aristophanes, though he lived well into the fourth century, is essentially a fifth century figure, and his life coincided with what is admitted by all to be one of the most interesting periods of human history. At the time of his birth Athens was at the height of her power, and while he was growing from youth to manhood, Pericles was at the helm of the state, the Acropolis was blossoming into one of the loveliest sights on earth, Sophocles and Euripides held the tragic stage, and Socrates was a familiar figure upon the streets. Thucydides, Xenophon, Plato, and probably Herodotus, were publishing during his lifetime. In the field of comic drama he measured swords with redoubtable antagonists. Cratinus and Eupolis, whose genius Professor Norwood skilfully assesses by a thorough study of ancient tradition and of their mutilated fragments, are regularly spoken of, along with Aristophanes, as the supreme masters of Greek comedy: and other less well-known dramatists occasionally succeeded in defeating him. The astonishing thing about some of these playwrights is their precocity. Eupolis is reported to have produced his first comedy in his seventeenth year, and it is probable that Aristophanes himself was no more than eighteen when he first competed.

His earliest extant drama, *The Acharnians*, one of his most brilliant comedies, secured the first prize against the veteran, Cratinus, and his own contemporary, Eupolis, when he was probably but twenty years of age. It is an astonishingly mature performance, and the Comic Spirit must have enjoyed the spectacle of this youth of twenty assailing the war policy of Athens and pillorying one of her most popular generals.

But though Aristophanes was born into such a brilliant period in the history of Athens, his comedies make it abundantly evident that he regarded an earlier Athens, the Athens of Marathon and Salamis and of the great tragic poet, Aeschylus, as his spiritual home. Even Pericles, the great hero of Thucydides, is disparaged by him: and it is interesting to note that here Aristophanes is in agreement with most of the comic dramatists of his time. The one exception to the prevailing attitude is to be found in the famous fragment of Eupolis who writes of Pericles with a depth of feeling which has impressed generations of scholars: "A rapid speaker, as you say, but besides his speed there was a charm that sat upon his lips, such a spell did he cast: and alone of all orators he left his sting in those that heard him." But Aristophanes' hatred of the war naturally extended to the Athenian who was mainly responsible for the policy of the city. And Pericles had associated also with some of those godless exponents of the higher criticism at whom the poet looked so askance. The philosophers and the sophists, who were perplexing the young Athenians of the time, Aristophanes regarded as dangerous innovators, whose doctrines were subversive of morality, and whose gospel of efficiency was likely to produce a class of glib politicians rather than patriotic statesmen. *The Clouds*, in which the poet takes up the quarrel between the old

and the new education, rather wilfully selects Socrates as the type of the new school of thought. There were probably many reasons why he was chosen as the victim. In the first place the real sophists were practically none of them Athenian by origin, and tradition and the taste of the spectators demanded an Athenian scapegoat. In the second place Socrates was a familiar figure to all the citizens, and was noted for his eccentricities of dress and character. He was the common butt of many of the comic dramatists. "Socrates too I hate, the beggarly chatterbox, who has thought out everything else but neglected to discover a source of food", exclaims a character in Eupolis. Ameipsias alone of the comedians pays him a compliment.[5] And further, there is little doubt, from what we learn in Plato's Phaedo, that Socrates did at one time feel an interest in those physical speculations of which Aristophanes makes such game in the *Clouds*. The portrait of Socrates in the play is, of course, the wildest caricature, and doubtless the spectators were as well aware of this as Aristophanes. But it may be seriously questioned whether the poet's presentation can have had much influence upon the verdict which was rendered against Socrates twenty-four years later: for we have already seen how little was the effect produced by the far more savage attack upon Cleon. Plato at least, who would have been quick to resent and punish any dangerous assault upon his beloved master, paints a wonderful picture of Socrates and Aristophanes together at the celebrated banquet of Agathon. That Socrates did have to pay a price for his eccentricities we may readily admit: but it is difficult to believe that the comic poets contributed seriously to his harm. They never touch

[5]It is interesting to reflect that the compliment very possibly occurs in a play of Ameipsias which secured second place at the very festival in which The Clouds, in its original version, was placed third.

upon his associations with Alcibiades and Critias: and it was in 404, and not 423, that his conduct must have seemed to need most explanation.

The most interesting of our poet's obsessions is undoubtedly Euripides: and whatever we may think of Euripides, we must at least be grateful for this obsession. For it has provided us with some of the poet's most excellent fooling. In three of the extant plays Euripides appears on the stage as a character: in nearly all of them he is quoted, distorted, parodied. The contest between Aeschylus and Euripides in the lower world for the prize of poetry, with Dionysus acting himself as judge, which forms the main scene in the *Frogs*, is, as Professor Norwood remarks, a genuine and valuable piece of literary criticism: and though there can be no doubt whatever as to the final issue, Euripides is at least allowed to make some shrewd and damaging criticisms of his rival. Euripides to Aristophanes is as the head of Charles the First to Mr. Dick. Aristophanes in spite of himself was tremendously influenced by him, and the famous taunt of Cratinus

> Super-sophistical, would-be logistical
> Hypereuripidaristophanistical,[6]

must have cut deep. That Aristophanes possessed an extraordinary familiarity with the plays of Euripides is proved by the ease with which he quotes and travesties his lines. It is evident that he bestowed upon him a grudging and reluctant admiration. But there can be no doubt too that he regarded him as a dangerous innovator, and all his conservative instincts rebelled against him.

The qualities which one would expect to find in a dramatist of the old comedy—riotous imagination, startling powers of invective, a rich gift of parody—Aris-

[6]J. T. Sheppard's rendering.

tophanes possessed to a superlative degree. But it is somewhat rare to find these characteristics united to a delicate, ethereal lyrical vein. The poet's lyrical qualities are peculiarly interesting, because he can dart from extravagant fun to serious and graceful poetry in one and the same metre: and it has been observed that in his comedies we possess the "earliest idyllic poetry of Greece", a foreshadowing of Theocritus and the Sicilian pastoral. The lyric element is noticeable in all the early plays, though it is naturally enough in the *Birds* that he shows his highest powers. But the entrance song of the chorus in the *Clouds* is as lovely as any lyric in the plays. Rogers' version, noble as it is, can but feebly reproduce the melody of the original:

Clouds of all hue,
Rise we aloft with our garments of dew,
Come from old Ocean's unchangeable bed,
Come, till the mountain's green summits we tread,
Come to the peaks with their landscapes untold,
Gaze on the Earth with her harvests of gold,
Gaze on the rivers in majesty streaming,
Gaze on the lordly, invincible Sea,
Come, for the Eye of the Ether is beaming,
Come, for all Nature is flashing and free.
Let us shake off this close-clinging dew
From our members eternally new,
And sail upwards the wide world to view.
Come away! Come away!

Here our poet, who can wield at will the bludgeon or the harlequin's stick and bladder, arms himself with a fairy's wand.

He cannot be revived, says George Meredith, and it is true enough: for the day of the city-state is over, and

the law no longer allows us to heap abuse in public upon our neighbours. The God of Wine, too, has been shorn of his old power, and the God of sarsaparilla and grape-juice seeks to usurp his throne. Surely a spectacle to make the irreverent old poet turn in his grave! What a comedy he could have made of Dayton, or the Fundamentalist, with a chorus consisting partly of apes and partly of angels: and what a comedy of Prohibition in America, with a chorus of blithe, accommodating Bootleggers and stern Pilgrim Fathers. Imagine William Jennings Bryan and Falstaff playing the leading rôles, and the Wet and the Dry Arguments debating for the soul of the college student. At intervals Old Demon Rum would career across the stage in embarrassed flight from the pursuit of his over-ardent supporters and bitter foes alike. The Trough and the Tankard would be visible as the symbols of the two religions (Δῖνος βασιλεύει), and the Statue of Liberty would stand in the background with a large and very wet pocket-handkerchief before her eyes. The poet might indeed come nearer home with a political comedy in which the orthodox Beauharnoisie measure swords with the atheistical Communist.

He is not to be revived. But, as George Meredith continues, "if his method were studied, some of the fire in him would come to us, and *we* might be revived."

CIVILIZATION VERSUS CULTURE

R. M. MACIVER

THE price we pay for being civilized is that we live in a peculiarly unstable world. The world of nature is capricious and unpredictable in detail, but beneath its caprice there is a fundamental rhythm and regularity. The world of man offers no such assurance. It is as restless as his own spirit. Let us imagine for a moment that the only changes we had to face were those of the established order of nature, of the organic life that passes from youth to age, of the periodic sequence of day and night, of spring and fall, of the changing moons which divide the Indian year. Let us imagine that there were no industrial and social revolutions, no scientific discoveries, no disturbing inventions, no complicated systems of finance and politics which crack and are repaired, which break and are replaced, no challenge of new creeds and new philosophies which upturn the order of our thought. Let us, in brief, think ourselves back into a more primitive or a more static society. In such a society, whatever its disadvantages, men have the sense of being at home. Their individual lives may be subject to grievous hazards, but their mental world is secure. They may be utterly ignorant of the causes of things, but they are never at a loss to explain them. Whatever befalls, they suffer no inward bewilderment. Whatever nature does to them, in spite of physical and spiritual terrors and all the tragedies of life, they are still her believing children.

In such a world the arts and crafts, the rules and techniques by aid of which men satisfy their needs, are all embedded in the social system. The bow and the spear are not mere utilitarian instruments by which

men hunt animals or fight enemies, they are also the objects of tradition and ceremonial, symbolic objects around which myths and magics gather. The canoe is not merely a means of transportation. It is constructed and utilized according to the rules of the tribal lore, with appropriate rites no less than with practical skill. Every object has in short a social as well as a technical significance. It belongs to the total culture of the community, harmoniously set within the order of its folkways. A similar statement can be made, in degree at least, concerning the more permanent utilitarian institutions of our own society. The mode in which we eat our dinner is not determined by the pangs of hunger. It is the product of our social life, elaborated into manners, surrounded with taboos, dignified by custom-determined apparatus, made ceremonial by a prescribed succession of courses and regulated meal-hours, and on more formal occasions by appropriate dress and order of precedence. Again, the institution of marriage does not stand by itself in a bare simplicity determined by the biological needs of sex or the social imperative of reproduction. It is a ceremonial affair, regulated not only by law but by a whole system of cultural standards, many of which have no obvious relation to the primary functions which the institution serves. The difference between ourselves and the primitive peoples is that this infusion of cultural significance permeates the whole apparatus of their lives whereas with us large portions of our civilization are sheer unadorned utilitarian objects and activities, devoid of any significance beyond their direct instrumental function. To this latter category belong, for example, most of our mechanisms and modes of production with their concomitant systems of industrial organization. The cement-mixer, the gasoline tank, and the steam

shovel have no cultural meanings. They embody no traditions, they are attended by no rituals, they are never wreathed with garlands and they are not socially enriched with associations and memories which relieve their stark utility; nor do cultural amenities control the work-a-day routine or the division of labour within our factories.

We may express the difference by saying that in primitive life culture and civilization are harmonized, whereas in modern society they are in part unreconciled and antithetical. I must here apologize for using these terms *culture* and *civilization* in a different sense from that which has been appropriated by the anthropologists. The way in which I propose to apply them is, however, not uncongenial to popular usage, it is in accordance with the practice of some other languages in which these words are found and it retains the older and characteristic quality of the term *culture*. By civilization I mean the techniques of living, by culture the values of living as they manifest themselves in social life. By civilization I mean the apparatus of means, by culture the system of ends they serve. Civilization is organization and applied science, power and property, in all their kinds and degrees, culture is the manner in which human societies express their vision of life, their humanity. Civilization is what we use, culture how we use it; civilization what we have and culture what we have made of it. These broad distinctions must be qualified as we proceed, but they may suffice here to bring out the general contrast between the two great categories which sum up between them all the achievements of mankind.

Meanwhile I return to our starting-point, that the harmony of the two in the business of living has been

disrupted by the swift transition of our industrial and mechanical age. Culture changes from within by a slow process of hidden maturation, even though the change may seem revolutionary. But a change of civilization is apt to have unexpected and unprepared-for reactions on our culture. Modern man was wholly unprepared for the profound disturbance of his settled ways and cherished convictions which the telescope, the steam-engine, the high explosive, electric power, the automobile, with their applications, have wrought. These new devices do not fit into the established order of things. They are developed without regard for cultural traditions, they introduce new modes of behaviour which are at variance with them. It takes time before a readjustment of civilization and culture can take place, and the process is always interrupted by fresh devices and inventions. Thus a changing world such as ours exhibits a lack of unity between the various aspects of living. We do not feel at home in the system we build. The more rapid the change in civilization the more distracted we are apt to become and the more remote seems that accommodation to one's world which the primitive man develops.

I am not for a moment suggesting that we should look back with longing eyes to the savage state. I cannot view that state with the romanticism of a Chesterton or even a Stuart Chase nor have I any personal sympathy with the easy academic laudation of bygone simplicities, or any temptation whatever to glorify the primitive man. I think that Hobbes, when he described the life of man under these conditions as "poor, solitary, nasty, brutish, and short", was right in four of his five adjectives. I am merely pointing out one of the inevitable conditions of every higher civilization, one of the neces-

sary hazards of the great human adventure away from the mere animal life. The maladjustment of our culture and our civilization is, I believe, the outstanding characteristic of our own age, just because our age has most rapidly advanced in terms of civilization, and it is nowhere so marked as in our own country, for precisely the same reason. I believe, however, as I shall try to show, that by taking thought, by recognizing the problem of living in a changeful world and by reorganizing our education accordingly, we can avoid certain undesired and unnecessary consequences from which at present we suffer.

Let me first make clear the difference between culture and civilization as already defined. A typewriter is an instrument of civilization, a novel or play or poem is an expression of culture. A motor engine, a railroad, a telephone system, an oil derrick, are instruments of civilization, though the uses to which we put them reveal our culture. A bank is an edifice of civilization, a church or a club an edifice of culture. The test question is whether the object exists for some direct satisfaction we get from the use of it, whether we want the thing as such or only some other thing to which it is a means. No one would build a factory or a bank for the satisfaction of working in them, but men have built churches for the satisfaction of worshipping in them. No one, except small boys, would build railroad tracks or locomotives for the fun of building them or for the joy that riding on railroads gives to themselves or to others. But men do compose music and paint pictures and write plays for the satisfaction these things directly give to themselves and to others. I know they also find in these services a means of livelihood, but they could not earn even the pittance which falls to most

artists unless people found some satisfaction in their work.

Now the curious thing about cultural products and cultural services is that in comparing them we have no standard of merit beyond our own individual judgment. Every cultural achievement is a personal challenge, and we have no instruments of precision to which we can shift the problem of appraisal. They appeal to us or they fail to appeal. They delight us or they leave us cold. By living in their presence we may learn to appreciate them better. Through experience and through education our taste and judgment may become more critical and more refined. But in the last resort there is no appeal beyond ourselves. *De gustibus non est disputandum.* There is no scientific method by which it can be shown that a Beethoven symphony is superior to jazz or the sculpture of Greece to the pathetic simulacra with which Italian peasants "decorate" their altars. And this peculiarity is closely associated with another. Culture does not move forward with assured and triumphant steps. The 1932 model is no necessary advance over that of 1931 or over that of the age of Elizabeth or of Perikles or of Confucius. We can afford some pride in our constantly improving means of transportation, we can plume ourselves on our continuous conquest of earth and sea and sky, we may admire—though the present situation stimulates reflections of a different order—the ever more far-flung system of economic and political organization in which our lives and our fortunes are meshed. But only the ignorant can assume a similar superiority in the cultural achievements of our age. A little knowledge of history dispels the naïve assurance that culture climbs the peaks of achievement side by side with civilization. The engineer with his tests of

efficiency, the economist with his standards of prosperity, and the statistician with his indices of all measurable things are alike powerless to measure the forward or backward steps of culture. Those who have studied it most differ on many things but they are agreed on this, that culture flows and ebbs in a seemingly wayward manner, in strong contrast to the seemingly resistless march of civilization.

* * *

The reason for these striking differences is not hard to find. It is contained in the saying that "the life is more than meat and the body than raiment." Civilization is the meat and the raiment of culture—that is all. Culture is the expression of ourselves, of our very nature. Its quality is our quality, not that of the garments we wear or of the machines we drive. A little incident will illustrate the point. I once was entertaining a visitor from a far country which had not yet been conquered by Henry Ford. On a Sunday afternoon we watched the to him unusual spectacle of a highway along which cars moved in two endless streams. My guest observed for a time in silence, until I interrupted to ask what he was thinking. "I was wondering", he said, "what it all meant. These people look just the same coming and going." He was in effect raising the question, What is the high degree of civilization which these people enjoy doing for their culture?

This contrast appears only under conditions of accelerated social change, especially such change as follows in the wake of new techniques and mechanical inventions. In our present world the clash of civilization and culture takes two very distinct forms. One of these occurs where a more advanced civilization is introduced from outside to a people habituated to an older system, a

system already harmonized with their culture. The new civilization may be imposed upon them, a fate which most primitive peoples are undergoing but which in some measure has also befallen the great oriental empires of India and China. Or it may be adopted deliberately by the people or at least by its leaders, as in the instances of Japan, Russia, and Turkey. Both situations are fraught with very significant and sometimes very disconcerting problems. In every case the existing culture suffers profound disturbances, and for large numbers it is as though the customary anchorage of life were suddenly removed. Others cling to uneasy compromises between the old assurances and the new intellectual fashions. More tragic is the lot of those who are uprooted from their old life by a civilization which is thrust upon them by others and from which others benefit rather than they. For the conquering civilization disrupts the old culture by destroying the vehicle of its expression. "I look", says a wistful Indian poet, "for the goats coming home in the haze of the evening: I see the trams jerking down the streets crowded with tired workers. I look for the blue threads of smoke rising from the huts at the cooking of the evening meal: I see the tall chimneys of the factories sending forth black clouds."[1] Futile as their opposition probably is in the long run, it is easy to understand why such leaders as Gandhi and Tagore resist the new civilization. What animates their resistance is not a love of the hand-loom and the potter's wheel, but a love of the old culture which the power-loom and the factory so effectively threaten.

The other main type of clash, and that which will concern us here, is illustrated in the countries of Western

[1]Quoted in Margaret Read, *The Indian Peasant Uprooted*, p. 53.

civilization. Here the changes in civilization are indigenous rather than introduced from without. But here too they have a profound impact on the pre-existing culture, none the less profound because those who do most to develop the new techniques seldom envisage their effect on culture. It is a curious fact that inventors like Edison and Ford have shown a distinct affinity for the kind of social and cultural life which their own inventions were overturning, for the "good old days", in short. Inventions enter the world like new-born babes. Their power to change the modes of life and the thoughts of men does not appear until they have grown up. They may become the liberators or the tyrants of men, but those who watch over their cradles cannot read the future in their innocent eyes. The spinning-jenny of Hargreaves and the steam-engine of Watt seemed at first indifferent to the culture within which they appeared. Who could have guessed that they would shake old creeds and customs and class distinctions, that they would make possible a new kind of democracy and a new kind of plutocracy, that they would ring the world with swift communication and intense competition, that modern trusts and trade-unions would be their children, that they would bring women from the home to the factory and the office and disturb the patriarchal organization of sex, that for the first time in history they would turn the majority of men into city-dwellers. Seemingly indifferent to the culture which received them, these inventions and their successors presently began, in the name of utility, to defy that culture. Utility demanded standardization and mass production and ugliness and haste. That too we may regard as only a stage, for culture learns in time to regain some of its lost provinces. But the accelerating

march of civilization brings ever new clashes, and so we have reached an age in which the conflict seems eternal, in which we cannot wait for the slower unconscious processes of accommodation but must deliberately take thought to limit the conflict and to save ourselves from its more serious consequences.

We must, in particular, take thought deliberately to save our culture from certain menaces of uncontrolled civilization and on the other hand to remake our civilization in order that it may fulfil its proper function, that of evoking and sustaining the cultural life of our people. It is vain to think of stopping the march of civilization. The return to the simple life, the life with less apparatus, is an idle and perhaps a foolish dream. If the conditions of advancing civilization are genuinely inconsistent with old ways and old ideals, these ways and ideals must surely, sooner or later, change. For example, the old ideas which cling around the principle of national isolation or independence are defeated by the newer arts of communication and the development of economic interrelationships. Being anachronistic, they are impediments, sometimes even grave perils, to our well-being. This seems peculiarly true of the sentiments which sustain the institution of war, an institution belonging to an old order of things and entirely incompatible with the new civilization. The hands of the clock of civilization cannot be turned back by our sentiments or even by our decrees. Take for instance the situation in regard to birth-control. This practice is out of accord with the *mores* of the patriarchal family, but it is integrally bound up with the conditions of modern civilization, with the conditions which have determined the fall of the death-rate, the relative economic independence of women, the increasing cost of

raising a family, the congestion of city-life, and so forth. The legislation of many countries, including our own, has banned it, but the birthrate falls none the less. A thousand other instances might be given from which I conclude that it is vain to stem the tide of civilization, but on the contrary we must learn to harness it so that instead of overwhelming us it shall serve our purposes the more.

There is certainly a danger that culture may suffer from the rapid advance of civilization. There are indeed signs that American culture is particularly subject to this danger. But the remedy cannot be found through any resistance to the process of civilization. It is not technique and invention to which we must attach the blame. The defect lies in ourselves, not in our machines. These will serve our purposes if we do not let them dictate our purposes. They make possible in fact a great expansion of the art of living, for they give us more power and more opportunity for leisure, for education, for experiment, for experience. All the great cultures of the past were dependent on this power and opportunity, though the culture and the opportunity by themselves created none of them. Past cultures possessed these advantages to a vastly more limited extent than does our own. They were confined to a select few, now they radiate out to multitudes. The ground is prepared for the seed of culture, if only we have the seed to sow.

It is curious that the very opportunities of culture prove also to be its obstacles. The engrossment with the means prevents us from seeing beyond them to the ends which they might serve. The age of the machine might free us from mechanical tasks, we might relegate these to mechanism itself. Instead, we are apt to become ourselves cogs in the great machine, and we

are apt to carry over to the free domain of culture attitudes and habits engendered in the domain of necessity. The means of life become subtly changed into its ends. Some of us even worship the thing which is our servant, the machine. Perhaps in all ages, in our own not least, men have been ready to worship, and therefore misvalue, another means, setting up the god of gold, but we have placed beside it in our pantheon, if somewhat lower, the god of the machine. Civilization is too much with us: getting and spending we lay waste our culture.

The prevalence of a mechanistic philosophy of life is one result. Civilization in certain respects dominates our culture, instead of being utilized by it. For example, there is a tendency among us to treat in mechanistic ways non-mechanical aspects of life. We eat and drink techniques. Our researchers are often more interested in methods of attaining truth than in the truth they may attain. They want to reduce all known qualities to quantities of the unknown. They apply the devices of the accountant to the works of Shakespeare or to the opinions of the common man. They would rather count things than understand them. Our artists themselves may be found, some of them, substituting formulae for imagination and geometrical patterns for inspiration. We treat crime and other social manifestations as though they were the eccentric responses to stimuli of a sensitized system called the organism. Even this depression, revealing as it does the consequences of uncontrolled nationalism in a world that demands intelligent cooperation, we are apt to treat as though it meant no more than the breakdown of certain financial techniques.

* * *

The serious and increasing maladjustment of civiliza-

tion and culture has or should have a peculiar import for our educational institutions. It sets them new tasks, it defines their mission in new ways. In a more static society it was all very well that the new generation should be indoctrinated in the ways and traditions of their fathers. These ways were also the ways that the young must tread, and no challenges of critics or of inventors were likely to confound the old traditions. In our changeful society the situation is entirely different. A static education in a changeful world does not arrest the process of change, it merely unfits the young for the business of living well in such a world. Civilization will keep on advancing even though no new geniuses should arise. It may have required a genius to devise the first flying machine or even the first trust, but only a not uncommon ingenuity is necessary to improve upon them. Civilization requires high leadership not so much for its advance as for its direction and control. In fact two kinds of men are peculiarly needed in an age like ours, and never more than at this present juncture. Two kinds of leadership are imperative, and the lack of both is sadly manifest at this hour. Neither can be produced at will in any educational factory, but a wisely directed educational system may turn the aptest minds to activities from which such leadership will result.

Of these two kinds of leadership one is called for by the very complexity of our modern civilization. Under these conditions each of us becomes something of a specialist. We master in some degree the special art or craft or technique which enables us to function efficiently in our respective rôles. We acquire the devices of the counting-house or the company directorate or the judicial bench or the professorial chair. Every specific part of the vast mechanism of modern society has its qualified engineers

to see that it is kept in running order. Somebody knows all the needed lore about each cog in the machine. Even the ward politician is an expert in his own art of being a politician. Any local trouble in the works is speedily repaired. But when the trouble is not localized, when it cannot be imputed solely to the bankers or the speculators or the farmers or the manufacturers or the government, when the whole machine is out of gear or when it is the net results of its operation which give us pause, then we call, too often in vain, for counsel and leadership. It is hard at all times to find men qualified to understand and direct the ever-larger enterprises of modern business, men who not only know their own immediate job but can transcend its limits and see the whole concern of which it is a part. To see things steadily and see them whole becomes both more difficult and more necessary. And if this problem perplexes the great private interests of our age it challenges still more, and without offering the same economic incentive for its solution, the greater public interests in which we are all of us shareholders.

Times like the present should teach us that a civilization can not be saved by its specialists. We need also synthetic minds, far-seeing minds, versatile minds, minds that understand the connections of things. The history of civilization since the Peace of Versailles—not to go back to the grosser blunders that preceded it—is a record of the bankruptcy of leadership. We have followed, as men over all the world have followed, our nearer narrower aims and failed to see the broader considerations on which their attainment must depend. To take a now obvious example, we have insisted on the payment of international debts and at the same time have raised ever-higher barriers to make that payment

impossible, imperilling in the process the whole structure of international exchange.

We have built a most complex nexus of economic and social relationships beside which the most elaborate systems of past civilizations look like children's toys. Our very life depends on their intelligent maintenance and enhancement. The vast mechanism will not work of itself. It is a human creation and needs human control. The more intricate it grows the more intelligence it demands. The danger which we face is that this synthetic intelligence will not be forthcoming. There are those who, like Oswald Spengler, believe that a high civilization is self-destructive, that it draws men farther and farther from the life of nature until it saps their primal blood. This fatalistic view I cannot accept, for reasons it would take too long to dwell on here. But I believe it has this degree of truth, that the more elaborate a civilization grows the more precarious it becomes. It is the far adventurous voyage of men who must depend more and more on their own ingenuity and resourcefulness the farther they leave their native shores behind. If civilization breaks down it is because human intelligence is unequal to the task of maintaining what that intelligence has itself created. And if it breaks down, part at least of the blame must fall on our education which busies itself overmuch with supplying specialists for the machine and overlittle with the harder problem of evoking the widened vision of the whole.

But another kind of leadership is also needed—and this brings me back to the heart of my subject and to the moral of this discourse. To save our civilization is not enough—perhaps it would not be worth saving unless we learn also to save ourselves within it. The conflict of civilization and culture means that the appa-

ratus of living interferes with the ends of living. We must learn to use it not only efficiently but also wisely, to treat it always as the servant it should be and not as the master it is apt to become. We must learn to charge it with our wider purposes, so that civilization exists for us and not vice-versa, so that it does not stand apart in semi-detachment from our lives, unintegrated with our personalities, like the furniture of the *nouveaux riches* We can never, as I have shown, return to the primitive harmony of civilization and culture. To secure even a degree of reconciliation demands a continuous fight against the pressures of the system, against the invasion of the forces of mechanization and standardization as they advance from their rightful place, the factory and the office, into the alien territory of our hearts. So engrossed are we with means that we even become uncomfortable in the presence of anything that claims to exist for its own worthwhileness, for its own beauty or its own truth, that does not serve some cause which in turn serves another in an endless chain. It is this tendency which threatens what used to be called a liberal education, and it is this tendency which every liberal college must resist if it is to survive. We are apt to question every subject which has no practical utility, to ask what it is good for, and if it doesn't help to do something else, it is *ipso facto* condemned. Teachers of theory are often asked this question by their students. The proper answer may be that theory is good for nothing—except the student's mind. Nothing is ultimately desirable unless it is good for nothing, that is unless it is good in itself, unless it is something we enjoy doing, unless, still more, it is something we enjoy *being*. Culture, I have said, is the expression of ourselves, the liberation of ourselves. We should take our stand at

need on the sheer uselessness, from the practical man's point of view, of a liberal education—that is what makes it liberal. But we shrink from doing so because of our reverence for the practical man. We want to keep within the endless circle of means. We make endless preparation for journeys that end nowhere.

It is against this encroaching attitude that the liberal college must be a living protest. Within it or with its aid must be bred the leaders who will re-define the ends of civilization, save men from becoming slaves of their own systems, show them in fresh ways the simple truth which alone gives meaning to all our striving, the truth that the life is more than meat and the body than raiment.

MATTHEW ARNOLD AND THE ELIZABETHANS

E. K. Brown

NOTHING is more peculiar in the criticism of Matthew Arnold than the rarity and the brevity of his references to his English contemporaries. "How astonishing it would be", exclaims Mr. T. S. Eliot "if a man like Arnold had concerned himself with the art of the novel, had compared Thackeray with Flaubert, had analysed the work of Dickens, had shown his contemporaries exactly why the author of *Amos Barton* is a more *serious* writer than Dickens, and, why the author of *La Chartreuse de Parme* is more serious than either?"[1] It would not be in the least astonishing: the usual way to a critical reputation, the way followed by Sainte-Beuve and by Taine and by Hazlitt, is in large part, at least, by illuminating analysis and appraisal of contemporary books. Matthew Arnold was so far from following this way that his only significant allusion to Dickens is in the course of an argument about Irish education and his only consideration of Tennyson and Clough is in a consideration of the style and metre proper to a translation of Homer. He speaks of his contemporaries only in passing, touches only upon an aspect or two of their work, leaves us in doubt of the estimate he would place upon them. Arnold's silence was no accident,—it was imposed upon him by his definition of criticism as "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world". "How much of current English literature" he inquires, "comes into this 'best that is known

[1]The Sacred Wood, p. xi.

and thought in the world'?" And he makes haste to answer: "Not very much, I fear."

To a much greater extent than with most other critics, Matthew Arnold's reputation rests upon his reconsideration of the major writers of the past, upon his efforts to secure more readers for them, and upon the guidance he gives such readers to a vivid and correct apprehension of what those writers stand for and are worth. From an English critic bent upon putting "the best that is known and thought" before his contemporaries, one would naturally expect a special preoccupation with the Elizabethans; and it is among the riddles of Arnold's criticism that no such preoccupation and regard is to be found in it. Stuart Sherman, a careful student of Elizabethan drama, was, I think, the first to draw attention to Arnold's neglect of the Elizabethans. He writes:

"Any student of the Elizabethan drama will undertake to revise and *improve* the 'roll of our chief poetical names, besides Shakespeare and Milton, from the age of Elizabeth downwards', which Arnold gives in his essay on Wordsworth: 'Spenser, Dryden, Pope, Gray, Goldsmith, Cowper, Burns, Coleridge, Scott, Campbell, Moore, Byron, Shelley, Keats' (and Wordsworth). What? one exclaims, Tom Moore a greater poetical glory than Jonson, Campbell a greater poetical glory than Marlowe, Goldsmith a greater poetical glory than Webster, Cowper or Scott a greater poetical glory than Beaumont and Fletcher! Arnold speaks elsewhere, to be sure, of the Elizabethan as a great poetical age, but this roll of honour, with its amazing predominance of men whose works fall after 1750, is pretty conclusive evidence that he was not intimately acquainted with it. One is almost

tempted to suggest that, in 'getting up' the period, he selected Spenser and Shakespeare as its best representatives and let the rest go."[2]

There Stuart Sherman left the matter, at what is a point of departure rather than of arrival. We must discover how much Arnold knew of the Elizabethans and why it was they failed to satisfy his aesthetic sense.

That they did not interest him is plain. He turned his back upon two admirable opportunities to consider them, one in his review of Stopford Brooke's *A Primer of English Literature*, another in his conspectus of English poetry in the introduction to Humphry Ward's *English Poets*. In the first instance the only Elizabethan, apart from Shakespeare, to whom Arnold refers, is Spenser; and all that is said of him is that he "is touched by Mr. Stopford Brooke almost as charmingly as Chaucer". In the second instance all that Arnold says of the Elizabethans is in two sentences:

"For my present purpose I need not dwell on our Elizabethan poetry or on the continuation and close of this poetry in Milton. We all of us profess to be agreed in our estimate of this poetry; we all of us recognize it as great poetry, our greatest, and Shakespeare and Milton as our poetical classics."[3]

Such a passage puts Arnold in a very false position. He is almost silent on the poetry of his contemporaries. Of the romantic poets he complained, "the English poetry of the first quarter of this century, with plenty of energy, plenty of creative force, did not know enough. This makes Byron so empty of matter, Shelley so incoherent, Wordsworth even, profound as he is, yet so

[2]Matthew Arnold: How To Know Him, pp. 162-163.
[3]Essays in Criticism (Second Series, 1888), pp. 34-35

wanting in completeness and variety."[4] Of the great poets of the eighteenth century he observed: "Though they may write in verse, though they may in a certain sense be masters of the art of versification, Dryden and Pope are not classics of our poetry, they are classics of our prose",[5] and Gray "the scantiest and frailest of classics in our poetry".[6] "Chaucer too", Arnold insists, "is not one of the great classics".[7] What remains of English poetry for so stringent a judge? Only "our Elizabethan poetry" and "the continuation and close of this poetry in Milton", poetry which the judge maintains to be "great poetry, our greatest". The student of Arnold will rightly wish to know what led the critic to so liberal an estimate, what use he made of the poetry on which he set such value and what veneration he had for the masters of Elizabethan poetry as individual poets.

The last question is the simplest and the one to be answered first. To Milton Arnold gave two critical essays; and although in the first of them *A French Critic on Milton*, this *Milton jeune et voyageant* makes unexpectedly grave reservations, veneration is not too vivid a term for his attitude to Milton. Milton is a touchstone for him; Milton is in continuous possession of the "grand style"; Milton is the only English poet who has "the power and charm of the great poets of antiquity".[8] But Milton is not, by Arnold's own expressions, a genuine Elizabethan: his poetry is "the continuation and close" of Elizabethan poetry. By the genuine Elizabethans Arnold is far less easily kindled.

After Shakespeare, to whom we shall return, Chapman is the Elizabethan of whom Arnold has spoken at

[4]Essays in Criticism (Oxford Edition, 1914), p. 13.
[5]Essays in Criticism (Second Series), pp. 41-42.
[6]*Ibid.*, p. 42.
[7]*Ibid.*, p. 31.
[8]*Ibid.*, p. 66.

greatest length. Of his translation of Homer, Arnold says:

"Its author is a poet, and a poet, too, of the Elizabethan age; the golden age of English literature as it is called, and on the whole truly called; for, whatever be the defects of Elizabethan literature, (and they are great), we have no development of our literature to compare with it for vigour and richness. This age, too, showed what it could do in translating, by producing a masterpiece, its version of the Bible. . . . As eminently as Homer is plain, so eminently is the Elizabethan literature in general, and Chapman in particular, fanciful. *Steeped in humours and fantasticality up to its very lips* (italics mine), the Elizabethan age, newly arrived at the free use of the human faculties after their long term of bondage, and delighting to exercise them freely, suffers from its own extravagance in this first exercise of them, *can hardly bring itself to see an object quietly or to describe it temperately.*" (Italics mine). . . . Homer expresses himself like a man of adult reason, Chapman like a man whose reason has not yet cleared itself."[9]

The recent researches of Professor T. M. Parrott and of M. Schoell have established the complete justice of such a view of Chapman's intelligence; but it may be predicted that the author of the passage just quoted will find little enough to please him in the great bulk of Elizabethan poetry.

Spenser is mentioned in one of the representative reading-lists given by Mrs. Woodhouse in her selections from Matthew Arnold's note-books;[10] and in the third of his lectures *On Translating Homer* Arnold says in his praise:

[9]Essays in Criticism (Oxford Edition), pp. 259-260.
[10]Matthew Arnold's Notebooks, p. 135.

" . . . The verse of Spenser is more fluid, slips more easily and quickly along, than the verse of almost any other English poet. . . . Spenser's verse is fluid and rapid, no doubt, but there are more ways than one of being fluid and rapid, and Homer is fluid and rapid in quite another way than Spenser. Spenser's manner is no more Homeric than is the manner of the one modern inheritor of Spenser's beautiful gift; the poet, who evidently caught from Spenser his sweet and easy-slipping movement, and who has exquisitely employed it; a Spenserian genius, nay, a genius by natural endowment richer, probably, than even Spenser; that light which shines so unexpected and without fellow in our century, an Elizabethan born too late, the early lost and admirably gifted Keats."[11]

In *Last Words* Arnold returns to Spenser and in the Spenserian stanza "that beautiful romantic measure" he finds "treasures of fluidity and sweet ease".[12] Such allusions establish Arnold's sensitiveness to Spenser's poetry, suggest that he might well subscribe to Wordsworth's "inspired lines" as Professor de Selincourt calls them:

"Sweet Spenser moving through his clouded heaven
With the moon's beauty and the moon's soft pace."

These tributes to Spenser came at the very beginning of Arnold's career in criticism; and the only significant and extended references to Spenser that he was to make in the thirty years which remained to him were a reference to Spenser's judgment of the Irish peasantry and a reference to the quality of Spenser's Puritanism which it will be convenient to quote in another connection. Spenser was not a reference which slipped readily from

[11]Essays in Criticism (Oxford Edition), p. 289.
[12]*Ibid.*, p. 410.

Arnold's pen as Chaucer was, or Milton, or Gray, or Keats, or Wordsworth, although by Arnold's express statement his writings, unlike theirs, belong to an age of "great poetry, our greatest".

What of the Elizabethan dramatists? The reading-lists in his notebooks show that Arnold read their plays, Jonson's and Massinger's, and Beaumont and Fletcher's, and doubtless many others. In the essay on *The French Play in London* he speaks of them:

"We know how the Elizabethan theatre had its cause in an ardent zest for life and living, a bold and large curiosity, a desire for a fuller richer existence; pervading this nation at large, as they pervaded other nations, after the long mediaeval time of obstruction and restraint. But we know, too, how the great middle class of this nation, alarmed at grave symptoms which showed themselves in the new movement, drew back; made choice for its spirit to live at one point, instead of living, or trying to live, at many; entered, as I have often said, the prison of Puritanism, and had the key turned upon its spirit there for two hundred years."[13]

Much of Arnold's criticism was an attempt to unlock the cell; and he might have been expected, in this essay at least, to have welcomed the Elizabethan dramatists, as he welcomed Sophocles and Goethe, as aids in his task. In this essay he pleads for an organization of the theatre with a repertory of Shakespeare and of eighteenth century drama with due allowance for the presentation of good contemporaries. To the Elizabethan drama he flings the compliment, "the splendid national drama of the Elizabethan age" and passes on to other and apparently surer hopes. In his disparagement of the

[13]Irish Essays and Others (1882), pp. 232-233.

poetic drama of Victor Hugo he lets fall in this same essay a remark or two which are revelatory to a marked degree of what stood between Arnold and the temper of Elizabethan tragedy. He says:

"The tragedy of M. Victor Hugo has always, indeed, stirring events in plenty; and so long as the human nerves are what they are, so long will things like the sounding of the horn, in the famous fifth act of *Hernani* produce a thrill in us. A thrill of this sort may be raised in us, and yet our poetic sense may remain profoundly dissatisfied."[14]

It is just such thrills that abound in *The Spanish Tragedy* or in *Tamburlan* and in the Elizabethan tragedies which followed them, complicating and subtilizing the materials of Kyd and Marlowe but in no essential way changing them. Furthermore, it is such thrills that make *Hamlet* the stage-vehicle that it is, and it is a little perplexing to find a critic who recoils from "a thrill of this sort" putting his mouth to the trumpet, as Victor Hugo might have said, and exalting "the splendid national drama of the Elizabethan age." And again:

"What is the poetical value of this famous fifth act of *Hernani*? What poetical truth, or verisimilitude, or possibility has Ruy Gomez, this chivalrous old Spanish grandee, this venerable nobleman, who, because he cannot marry his niece, presents himself to her and her husband upon their wedding-night, and insists on the husband performing an old promise to commit suicide if summoned by Ruy Gomez to do so. Naturally the poor young couple raise difficulties, and the venerable nobleman keeps plying them with: *Bois! Allons! Le sépulcre est ouvert, et je ne puis attendre. J'ai hâte! Il faut*

[14] *Ibid.*, p. 226.

mourir! This is a mere character of Surrey melodrama."[15] It will be immediately evident that the temper of Ruy Gomez and of the scene and play in general is the temper of a very great part of Elizabethan tragedy. The jocularity with which Arnold considers *Hernani* could scarcely be repressed in a consideration of the Elizabethan analogues.

Turning to Arnold's attitude toward the masters of Elizabethan prose, one expects perhaps to find a more substantial body of opinion. For at the outset of his preface to Burke's *Letters, Speeches, and Tracts on Irish Affairs* he insists:

"We English make far too little use of our prose classics,—far less than the French make of theirs. . . . Shakespeare and Milton we are all supposed to know something of; but of none of our prose classics, I think, if we leave stories out of the account such as are the *Pilgrim's Progress* and the *Vicar of Wakefield* are we expected to have a like knowledge. Perhaps an exception is to be made for Bacon's *Essays*, but even of this I do not feel sure. Our grandfathers were bound to know their Addison, but for us the obligation has ceased; nor is that loss, indeed, a very serious matter. But to lose Swift and Burke out of our mind's circle of acquaintance is a loss indeed, and a loss for which no conversance with contemporary prose literature can make up, any more than conversance with contemporary poetry could make up to us for unacquaintance with Shakespeare and Milton."[16]

As well as the extracts from Burke, Arnold edited a group of Johnson's *Lives*; and of Swift's prose he spoke time

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 227-228.
[16] *Op. cit.*, pp. v-vi.

and again. But to Bacon he refers but a very few times and even then very briefly. He mentions him twice in his *Notebooks*, once merely as a convenient antithesis to Kant. In a letter written in January 1851 he states:

"I read his (Goethe's) letters, Bacon, Pindar, Sophocles. Th. à Kempis and Ecclesiasticus, and retire more and more from the modern world and modern literature which is only what has been before and what will be again, and not bracing or edifying in the least."[17]

To admit Bacon to such a company was a great honour but he seems to have been an inarticulate guest. Nowhere does Arnold make such use of him as he makes of Descartes in the second chapter of *God and the Bible* or of Spinoza in one of the *Essays in Criticism*. The explanation of Arnold's attitude to Bacon and to the Elizabethan prose-writers in general is to be found in his reiterated belief that "the Restoration marks the real moment of birth of our modern English prose". In his paper *On The Modern Element in Literature* he contrasts the prose of Thucydides with the prose of Sir Walter Ralegh in his *History of the World*. Thucydides uses an idiom which, in Arnold's view, is as modern as that of Burke or Niebuhr; Ralegh "wanders among (facts) helplessly and without a clue", and "the language of Ralegh affords a fair sample of the critical power, of the point of view possessed by the majority of intelligent men of his day."[18] The point of view, the critical power, of Chapman, for example, whose prose Arnold reproves as that of a man "being beguiled to wander off with (a) fancy till his original thought, in its natural reality, knows him no more." "It is the victory of (the) prose style, 'clear, plain, and short' over what Burnet calls 'the old

[17]Letters of Matthew Arnold (ed. Russell), Vol. I, p. 15.
[18]Essays in Criticism (Oxford Edition), p. 463.

style long and heavy' which is the distinguished achievement, in the history of English letters, of the century following the Restoration", Arnold contends in his preface to Johnson's *Lives*;[19] and he goes on to remark that "for the purposes of modern life the old English prose, the prose of Milton and Taylor is cumbersome, unavailable, impossible."[20] From the author of that statement it would be vain to expect enthusiasm for the florid prose of the *Euphues* or the *Arcadia*, or for the ornate prose of Donne or Sidney in the *Apology*, still less for the unorganized prose of the commonplace Elizabethan. But what of the prose of Hooker which possesses in an eminent degree the cardinal virtues of prose in Arnold's doctrine,—"regularity, uniformity, precision, balance"? What of the prose of Sir Thomas Elyot or of Sir Thomas Wilson at their best? Are they in sober reality "cumbersome, unavailable, impossible"? Is it possible to conceive adjectives less apt for the prose of Bacon in his *Advancement of Learning*? To such questions Arnold supplies no answers.

It has been convenient to postpone the consideration of Arnold's attitude to Shakespeare until this point, for his attitude to Shakespeare presents in little the general problem of his attitude to the Elizabethans. From Dryden down no critic of anything like Arnold's rank has said so little of Shakespeare. There is of course the early sonnet, scarcely this side idolatry, celebrating Shakespeare the seer and closing with the unforgotten tribute:

"All pains the immortal spirit must endure,
All weakness which impairs, all griefs which bow,
Find their sole speech in that victorious brow."

[19]The Six Chief Lives of Johnson's Lives from the Poets, p. xxi.
[20]*Ibid.*, p. xxii.

In prose, however, it is Shakespeare the master of language rather than Shakespeare the master of thought who solicits Arnold's attention. He objects to Stopford Brooke's claim that Shakespeare was "the greatest artist the modern world has known", pointing out:

"When we call a man emphatically *artist*, a *great artist*, we mean something more than this temper in which he works; we mean by art not merely an aim to please, but also, and more, a law of pure and flawless workmanship. As living always under the sway of *this* law, and as, therefore, a perfect artist, we do not conceive of Shakespeare. His workmanship is often far from being pure and flawless.

Till that Bellona's bridegroom, lapp'd in proof
Confronted him with self-comparisons—

There is but one name for such writing as that, if Shakespeare had signed it a thousand times,—it is detestable. And it is too frequent in Shakespeare. . . . (In the first version of the essay "abounds" stood in place of "is too frequent".) He is the richest, the most wonderful, the most powerful, the most delightful of poets; he is not altogether, nor even eminently, an artist."[21]

The language of Shakespeare is not the equal of the language of Homer: "Homer always composes as Shakespeare composes at his best."[22] Neither is it the equal of the language of Milton who has the secure possession of the grand style whereas there is "not a tragedy of Shakespeare but contains passages in the worst of all styles, the affected style".[23] The presence of such

[21]Mixed Essays, 1880, pp. 193-194.
[22]Essays in Criticism (Oxford Edition), p. 267.
[23]*Ibid.*, p. 290.

passages places Shakespeare as a writer below Pindar and below Dante as well:

"It is the simple passages in poets like Pindar and Dante which are perfect, being masterpieces of *poetical* simplicity. One may say the same of the simple passages in Shakespeare; they are perfect, their simplicity being a *poetical* simplicity. They are the golden easeful crowning moments of a manner which is always pitched in another key from that of prose, a manner changed and heightened; the Elizabethan style, regnant in most of our dramatic poetry to this day, is mainly the continuation of this manner of Shakespeare's. It was a manner much more turbid and strown with blemishes than the manner of Pindar, Dante, or Milton; often it was detestable; but it owed its existence to Shakespeare's instinctive impulse towards style in poetry, to his native sense of the necessity for it; and without the basis of style everywhere, faulty though it may in some senses be, we should not have had the beauty of expression, unsurpassable for effectiveness and charm, which is reached in Shakespeare's best passages."[24]

Still, in *The French Play in London*, where Arnold sets out to explode the French contention that Victor Hugo is "a poet of the race and lineage of Shakespeare", he speaks of "the verse of Shakespeare the verse of the highest English poetry" and admits that "the iambic of the Attic tragedians is of the *same* (italics mine) high and splendid quality."[25] The reasonable conclusion is that Arnold thought highly of the music of Shakespeare's verse, but that his esteem for the style, the idiom, of Shakespeare was limited by a perception that only here

[24]On The Study of Celtic Literature (1867), pp. 137-138.
[25]Irish Essays and Others, p. 215.

and there was this style and idiom of perfect felicity. There are many other passing allusions to the style of Shakespeare, the most striking of which is, perhaps, the description of it as alternating between the Celtic and the Greek notes, a description which, accompanied as it is by a multitude of examples, I still find artificial and unintelligibly vague.[26]

Despite the lines quoted from the sonnet to Shakespeare, as a master of thought, as a seer, as "a friend and aider to those who would live in the spirit", he does not seem to have meant much to Matthew Arnold. True, in the essay on Keats Arnold salutes him as a great moral interpreter; and in *Lear* he discovers an architectonic power which stands comparison with that in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus.[27] But, for Arnold, Shakespeare was not modern, as Sophocles or Goethe was; the comparison between the modernity of Thucydides and Niebuhr, on the one hand, and the primitivism of Sir Walter Ralegh, on the other, is barely more explicit than the following passage:

"Shakespeare's task was to set forth the spectacle of the world when man's spirit reawoke to the possession of the world at the Renascence. The spectacle of human life, left to bear its own significance and tell its own story, but shown in all its fulness, variety, and power, is at that moment the great matter; but if we are to press deeper, the basis of spiritual life is still at that time the traditional religion, reformed or unreformed, of Christendom, and Shakespeare has not to supply a new basis. But when Goethe came, Europe had lost her basis of spiritual life; she had to find it again; Goethe's task was,—the inevitable task for the modern poet

[26]On The Study of Celtic Literature, pp. 167-168.
[27]Essays in Criticism (Second Series), p. 120.

henceforth is,—as it was for the Greek poet in the days of Pericles . . . not to exhibit all the kingdoms of human life and the glory of them like Shakespeare, but to interpret human life afresh, and to supply a new spiritual basis to it. This is not only a work for style, eloquence, charm, poetry, it is a work for science; and the scientific serious German spirit, not carried away by this and that intoxication of ear, and eye, and self-will, has peculiar aptitudes for it."[28]

Shakespeare, then, lacks, in some degree at least, and perhaps in a very high degree, what Arnold not very happily calls science. Nothing could be nearer the truth than to say that he was prone to be "carried away by this and that intoxication of ear, and eye, and self-will". The point at issue is not the fact of his proneness to this but the possibility of his intoxications leading him toward great poetry or the possibility,—for Arnold a certainty,—of their leading him away from it. Shakespeare is not, in Arnold's view, relevant to the nineteenth-century mind; neither in style nor in thought is he a writer who matters as Homer or Sophocles or Goethe or Wordsworth matter. He is not of those "who prop in these bad days the mind"; and he is among those who make the writing of great works difficult because he had capitulated to "their eternal enemy, Caprice".[29]

What Arnold held most strongly against Skakespeare was, perhaps, the influence of such a capitulation. "I will venture", he says, "to express a doubt whether the influence of his works, excellent and fruitful for the readers of poetry, for the great majority, has been of

[28]On The Study of Celtic Literature, pp. 171-172. Reiteration of this view may be found in the *Letters of an Old Playgoer*. I have preferred to ignore these in my argument since they are concerned with productions of plays rather than with plays themselves.

[29]Irish Essays and Others, p. 305.

unmixed advantage to the writers of it". And to justify his doubt he proceeds:

"To (the) general characteristics of all great poets he added a special one of his own, a gift, namely, of happy abundant and ingenious expression, eminent and unrivalled: so eminent as irresistibly to strike the attention first in him, and even to throw into comparative shade his other excellencies as a poet. Here has been the mischief. . . . These attractive accessories of a poetical work being more easily seized than the spirit of the whole, and these accessories being possessed by Shakespeare in an unequalled degree, a young writer having recourse to Shakespeare as a model runs great risk of being vanquished and absorbed by them, and, in consequence, of reproducing, according to the measure of his power, these, and these alone. Of this prepondering quality of Shakespeare's genius, accordingly, almost the whole of modern English poetry has, it appears to me, felt the influence. To the exclusive attention on the part of his imitators to this, it is in a great degree owing that in a majority of modern poetical works the details alone are valuable, the composition worthless."[30]

To put the beauty of the parts before the beauty of the whole, to conceive of expression as something more than a condign and adequate vesture for emotion and thought, in a word to put inspiration before composition, is what Shakespeare, beyond any question, does and does often, and what Arnold's doctrine will not admit. Arnold stands in the long line of neo-classical critics although he may not use their aesthetic terminology.

For Arnold's attitude toward the Elizabethan age as a whole the best source is *On The Modern Element in*

[30] *Ibid.*, pp. 294-296.

Literature which, as his inaugural lecture from the Oxford Chair of Poetry, has an altogether exceptional status. In this study Arnold contrasts with the age of Elizabeth the age of Augustus and the age of Pericles, with the explicit purpose of showing that the age of Augustus was modern but without a fully adequate literature, that the age of Pericles was modern and with a fully adequate literature, whereas the age of Elizabeth was not modern at all. A modern age, according to Arnold's conception is an age whose activity and expression is relevant to his own. "Such an epoch and such a literature are modern", he writes, "in the same sense in which our own age and literature are modern (when) they are founded upon a rich past and upon an instructive fulness of experience."[31] Only such an age and such a literature have an imperative claim upon our minds. Arnold contrasts the age of Elizabeth with the age of Pericles in four typical respects: the English dressed with fantastic gorgeousness, the Greeks with simple elegance; the English were addicted to barbarous diversions, the Greeks to cultivated ones; the Greeks had ceased to carry arms, the English continued to carry them; the English expressed themselves in the amorphous idiom of Sir Walter Ralegh, the Greeks in the adequate idiom of Thucydides.[32] The Elizabethans, in short, were defective in civilization; their minds lacked discipline and delicacy; they were primitive. Upon a civilized modern they have no powerful claim. This is one half, and the more decisive half of Arnold's opinion of them; for the other half, we may take the reference to Spenser which was withheld before.

It occurs in the essay on *Falkland*; and it runs thus:

[31] Essays in Criticism (Oxford Edition), p. 459.
[32] *Ibid.*, pp. 459-463.

"When one considers the strength, the boldness, the self-assertion, the instincts of resistance and independence in the English nature, it is surely hazardous to affirm that only by the particular means of the Puritan struggle and the Puritan triumph could we have become free in our persons and property. When we consider the character shown, the signal given, in the thinking of Thomas More and Shakespeare, of Bacon and Harvey, how shall we say that only at the price of Puritanism could England have had free thought? When we consider the seriousness of Spenser, that ideal Puritan before the fanatical Puritans and without their faults; when we consider Spenser's seriousness and pureness, in their revolt against the moral disorders of the Renascence, and remember the allies which they had in the native integrity and piety of the English race, shall we even venture to say that only at the price of Puritanism could we have had seriousness? Puritanism has been one element in our seriousness; but it is not the whole of our seriousness, nor the best in it."[33]

As Mr. Chesterton and Mr. Belloc use the England of the Middle Ages to establish that Puritanism is a deviation from the normal development of English life, Arnold is tempted to use the England of Elizabeth. His sympathies with that England are, however, imperfect, his acquaintance with it perfunctory; and more often and more effectively he goes abroad and, abandoning the national unit, he seeks to establish that Puritanism is a deviation from the normal development of civilization in general. Sophocles takes the place of Shakespeare, Marcus Aurelius the place of Bacon, Goethe the place of Spenser. Compared with the other periods of English literature the Elizabethan seemed to Arnold to be great,

[33]Mixed Essays, pp. 228-229.

indeed our greatest; but compared with the golden ages of world literature, neither the Elizabethan age considered as a whole nor its preeminent masters, with the solitary and significant exception of Milton, seemed to him to have the light or the urbanity or the adequacy or the simplicity which he required of the great. In a passing reference he might pay the Elizabethans lip-service; whenever he amplified a reference it became an inquiry into their shortcomings.

MARJORIE PICKTHALL

1883-1922

W. E. Collin

MARJORIE PICKTHALL was harassed by two or three handicaps. If she could have got rid of them she would have been the solitary great writer in Canadian literature.

She was born a woman. There was no remedy for that; and it would not have mattered so much if she had been born a decade or so later when hardly any form of activity was regarded as the exclusive preserve of the male. But as it was, she found that the life of adventure for which she yearned all her days was denied her.

"To me," she wrote two years before her death, "the trying part is being a woman at all. I've come to the ultimate conclusion that I'm a misfit of the worst kind. In spite of a superficial femininity—emotion with a foreknowledge of impermanence, a daring mind with only the tongue as an outlet, a greed for experience plus a slavery to convention—what the deuce are you to make of that?—as a woman? As a man, you could go ahead and stir things up *fine*."

One of the last poems she published expresses the same disappointment and yearning, as of a hunter:—

Shut-in

If I should live again,
O God, let me be young,
Quick in sinew and vein,
With the honeycomb on my tongue,
All in a moment flung
With the dawn on a grassy plain,

Riding, riding, riding, riding,
Between the sun and the rain.

If I, having been, must be,
O God, let it be so,
Swift and supple and free
With a long journey to go,
And the clink of the curb, and the blow
Of hooves, and the wind at my knee,
Riding, riding, riding, riding,
Between the hills and the sea.

That is how she felt about her life as she looked back over it. Since the gratification of her desire was thwarted, it became pent up and, as happens when our instincts are repressed, it sought other outlets or, to use modern phraseology, other derivatives and sublimations. We have an example of introversion, the writer is thrown back upon herself; we are not surprised, then, to find her work coloured with symbols. To surcharge the atmosphere of repression, it happened, too, that the people who had anything to do with her life were women: at home with her mother and aunt, as a girl at St. Mildred's Church School, as a young lady at Bishop Strachan School, and after——. The activities associated with her schooling took place in an aura of feminine sanctions which is felt in her literary work: in the themes and the tendency in her early work to tell a story as though she were telling it to children, and, later, the tendency in her male characters to speak and act effeminately, as a young lady supposes they speak and act. Her female characters are without identity and importance; she has little interest in them.

She read what she could devour, she swallowed all that her father could tell her about the North Country,

but she did not have a direct knowledge of varieties of people which a great writer can present to us instinct with life, nor of places and events which, described by a great writer, convey an impression of definite actuality and conviction.

Her first poems were about sea-spirits and fairies; their lawn and fairy-rings appear wherever she strikes the call to childhood: in *Wanderlied*, *The Rover*, *Hillman's Lass* (*hillman* is equivalent to troll in Scandinavian folk-lore) and *The Inevitable Hour*. She wrote and illustrated children's stories about them for The Circle of Young Canada in the Toronto *Globe*. But the call to fairyland soon turns into a call to wild nature which is identified with all that is dearest to us (*The Soul of the Child*) and which becomes particularized, for example, as the North-land. Ole Varenne is the symbol of that call:

"Ole Varenne stretched out his arms to the open door. 'I am dying,' he whispered, 'and I cannot die here. I'll get no sleep in this crowded place. Lay me in your canoe and take me north again. I die very soon. . . Take me north,' said Ole Varenne, 'for now I shall die very quickly'."

The Wanderer, which was published when she was sixteen, ends with these lines:

> Yet I long to see the houses all so square and low and white,
> And the stately palm trees bending o'er the bay;
> And the great moon rising slowly from the rippled sea at night,
> As it does in *those fair countries far away*.

In her earliest stories, published about the same time (1899-1905), the thought of breaking mother's apron strings is more explicit.

"How long," thought Two-Ears, the little Indian boy, "shall I be dependent upon the women for my very dinner?" Geronimo,[1] another Indian boy, was brought up in a Mexican convent. "The good fathers had cared for him, and taught him for many years, and soon he would have to become a novice, and then a lay brother, *for such had been his mother's wish.* There would then be no more Geronimos—only another unit in the great order." But Geronimo "much preferred the duties of a *gardener* to those of an acolyte." He went with a donkey to buy wood in the little village, and he was in love with Juanita. "When he prayed in the chapel, Juanita looked down at him from the gaudy shrine, instead of 'Our Lady of Seville'. When he chanted in the choir, his lips sang psalms, and his heart love songs." He was seen kissing Juanita, and Padre Antonio, who had often checked him for being over-mirthful, said he would have to be punished. Then Geronimo rebelled and went out of the garden gate and serenaded Juanita on a cracked guitar. "He felt himself a man." "Perhaps they still thought of him as a child," the young author remarks, "and forgot that at thirteen an Indian is, in many ways, a man." So much for Indians and precocious whites.

Instead of calling the princess[2] after her great-grandmother, Blanchinda Lilliana, Miss Pickthall says they named her Bruna, for she was not one of those celebrated princesses who have lovely golden hair and blue eyes. She was a rebellious young maiden who knocked over all the conventions. Instead of riding a cream-coloured palfrey, she jumped on a brown horse, the swiftest in the Queen's stables, and galloped off into the

[1] *The Fall of Geronimo. Mail and Empire.* Toronto, September 22, 1900.
[2] *The Fairy Horn. The Globe.* Toronto, September 2, 1905.

forest when her mother wanted her to marry Prince Karl of Karlsbad, a hunchback. The old story-tellers themselves practised no cleverer sleight of hand, for that is just the place for her to be charmed by fairy music. When she returns home her mother meets her at the garden gate and cries: "O, my dear, my long-lost child." The princess thought she had been away only a short three hours, but she had been away three years: which is a reversion to the old Celtic themes.

Two subjects engage her attention now: Celtic fairyland and Indian legends. She wrote paraphrases of Indian legends for the *Globe*—wrote them as though she had seen the thing happen; she knows how Kipling does it:

"The wolf laughed behind his paw and went away."

. . . . . .

"Michabo scrambled up the black, wet rocks beside the waterfall, grazing his knees dreadfully."

. . . . . .

"For two days he hid in the wigwam, where he was so much in the way that they could scarcely get the cooking done."

Her short pieces to the *Globe* on *January*, *February* and *March* in 1910 hang upon the journey into fairyland:

"She stared into the silver moonlight, doubtful a little, a little afraid. A while ago she had known of nothing there but the frost-mist and the little wind of the high pasture, which even in summer kept the cows cool. Now it seemed she saw wings, shadowy faces, white feet that were never still."

And she herself confesses: "Time and again I know I have almost caught a dryad, one of those quick birch dryads with the silvery fair hair, or a brown maple dryad in moccasins; but I was just a wee bit too slow or something."

She had Celtic blood in her veins from her mother, who was, until her death in 1910, her most intimate companion. "From her mother," says Dr. Pierce, "she inherited southern English, Irish, and French Huguenot strains." The same writer describes Marjorie as "a pretty, dimpled child, possessing a wealth of golden, curly hair, and hazel eyes that could either be soft and dreamy or flash with a decided will and temper quite her own."[3] We may not be warranted—simply because her hair was golden—in saying that Marjorie Pickthall was Irish, but it is a fact capable of demonstration that her work, prose and verse, is often stamped with those peculiarities which all the world knows as Celtic.

The Irish Celt is an introvert; his artistic experience often takes place in an ideal world in direct contrast with the world of material laws and forces, which he shuns. The heroes that have held him spell-bound since the pre-Christian era were concerned in miraculous events outside the conception of the scientific mind; or in goings to an imaginary land called the Land of the Ever Young or the Land of Heart's Desire, out to the West, the way of the setting sun. A lengthy chapter in his literature is inspired by his legendary ancestors who, whatever human attributes they once possessed, are now become fairies of the hills, little folk or shees. A poet like Marjorie Pickthall whose blood is only partly Celtic will give proof of her nurture: adventures which a Saxon swallows with a pinch of salt, the call to the West, and the escape into fairyland. These elements, which enter into the temperamental disposition of a poet—and which seem to be ingrained in the feminine temperament—produce certain nuances in his compositions; and what is more disastrous to art, his disposition to revery and yearning may throw

[3] *Marjorie Pickthall: A Book of Remembrance.* Toronto, 1925.

a query of doubt over his adventures and charge his figures and descriptions with wordy impurities, for revery is only second-hand vision and, like hearsay, only partially convincing; it is a truism that the greatest art is the product of direct vision, immediate experience.

In Marjorie Pickthall's literary career you may watch the successive waves of influence touch her pen. Kipling was popular in the late nineties; in the early nineteen-hundreds Yeats, Fiona Macleod (Pelham Edgar was writing about these and Maeterlinck in the Toronto *Globe* in 1905), then Masefield and Conrad.

Miss Pickthall thought Kipling's *Jungle Books* were "lovely", "delightful". She bought Daddy *Barrack-Room Ballads* and *Departmental Ditties*. "The silly old Guild Gazette," she says, "has a really decent poem in it this time, one of Kipling's."[4] In 1900 she wrote to the Young People's Corner of the *Mail and Empire* of "the faculty that Kipling possesses of photographing, as it were, the scene he is describing on his reader's brain by means of his vivid words. A description ought surely to convey as accurate an idea as possible of the object described. After reading *From Sea to Sea* you feel as if Japan was a familiar country and as if you had seen Chitor by moonlight; you have an impression that you know every place spoken of, whether in Asia or America." Now when you read Miss Pickthall's stories you do not feel in any but a few exceptional passages that the country she describes is familiar to you; you have not the impression that you know every place spoken of. In fact very few places are mentioned. Her stories are laid in regions or areas, descriptions of which may be had second-hand. Even in *Little Hearts*, the Downs country where she was living in England, the reader never knows

[4]Dr. Pierce: *op. cit.*

Betsworth, nor the Downs, and only vaguely the two principal characters, Michael Sampson and Anthony Oakshott. If the book is kept going at all, it is by the constant application of imaginative effort. Anthony's wild ride in the night (Chap. XXII) is something imagined and not experienced in the ordinary sense of that word.

Kipling and Conrad had seen the things they described and, if only once and for a few minutes, some fresh touch will make us feel that they have seen them; the expected local word or translated turn of phrase will only irritate us. Of Conrad she said, for her own sake, she hardly dared to read him. But when we read such stories as *The Black Hand*, *Fisher of the Moon*, *The Bridge*, we are half-aware of the presence of that novelist; as we sense the ghost of Kipling here and there from the earliest story *Two-Ears* in 1899 to *The Lost Spring* in 1919.

The poet who stirred us in our youth with *D'Avalos' Prayer* and *Vagabond* would recognize something of himself in *Pieter Marinus* and *Ebb-Tide*.

Concerning the work of Fiona Macleod, her opinion was that it "will remain a class by itself, supreme in that element of strangeness and mystery which is the last and crowning touch of creative beauty."

In "The Shadow on the Dial", the page she contributed month by month to the *Canadian Courier* during 1911, at the date of February 18, we can see how utterly she absorbs an author with whom she has kinship:

"Yet people said that Evan was fey, and that when he went to drink at a pool *a face* looked over his shoulder *that no other christened soul could see*. 'And that is a very true thing,' said little Evan, 'for it is *white feet among the foam* and *a following shadow* in the thick of the heather, and *the eyes of beauty* in the stars at night, and *the lips of her* in the curve of a flower'."

In the pages of these vagabond dreamers Marjorie Pickthall felt the joy of escape. Her stories of men's adventures in regions more or less remote from prosaic, materialistic Ontario are derivatives of a yearning to slip the noose of the conventions and set her sails for "those fair countries far away" where she could "stir things up *fine*." Not so far away were French Canada and the Canadian Northland, but she had a magic carpet on which she could go in search of rubber and strange Mexican gods, hover around a Japanese garden, or follow the mirage across the Deserts of the South.

Some of her short stories have no sentiment in them, and are perfect—not for that reason, of course. Some are stories of adventure, marred by a too liberal dose of the sensational. The most personal of them are variations of themes wherein appear the two or three elements of her love symbolism.

She may have heard her father describe a storm. A storm will show a hero's daring and fortitude. She will describe a snow-storm increasing in intensity, during which a hero has to plod on day after day until his eyes are blind to fetch a doctor. One abuse consists in drawing the extraordinary experience out to its tenuous limit; another in bringing the storm into the business at all: the electric storm on the railway in South Africa, the wind and waves that carried off the unwanted man in *The Sleeping Faun*, the flood which brought together two Gaels who had not been on speaking terms for forty years. Shipwreck is a common experience, as in a dream. She is often melodramatic. It may not be quite so easy to get out of a slimy well as it was for the German who was in search of the black orchid growing under the nose of an ancient and revengeful god. It is not pleasant to feel a great black hand clutching at the raft which is between

you and the deeps; nor to find another fellow clinging to the other side of the small ship's boat which means life to you and know that one of you must let go.

In order to be convinced we almost demand that some of the experiences be told in the first person. "What is all this?" we ask. It is all fictitious, a concoction; the author is so far outside it. The story, then, is not burdened with personal or moral reflections. It has, moreover, to obey its own law: be swift. What the author felt about her own life and life at large is contained in the theme-adventure of her stories; and in her poems.

In stories of the type of *The Interlude*, *The Lost Orchard*, and *The Seventh Dream*, love's call to adventure is symbolized by wild nature, woods or desert, the fear of danger by a gun or sword (a knife in *The Wood Carver's Wife*), and the disillusionment by a mirage or dream. To illustrate our thesis let us take *The Seventh Dream*, the story of Freeth Duncan, a young architect whose dream made "reality unreal and life loneliness."

"In a carved wooden tray, with a pint of sand, some coloured stones and a few toy trees, some nameless Japanese artist had made a garden . . . willow trees . . . a pool, a gray heron and a simple clump of crimson peonies. It was a perfect landscape garden, eight inches by twelve." A miniature, Tom-Thumb garden. The young architect, let us notice, kept it on the table in his office. He lost consciousness, Miss Pickthall says, "of our Western slavery to the limitations of mere *size*."

"I used to work till I couldn't see, and then drop into the chair here and stare at my garden till I fell asleep . . . and it pleased me to fancy that each time I sat in front of it, between sleep and waking, it was easier to imagine that I was *in* the garden. I . . . cultivated the illusion.

"Then, without warning, the thing happened. Some

barrier went down; it felt like that. One minute I was in the chair more or less awake; the next minute I was asleep—I suppose—and in the garden."

Often Miss Pickthall escapes like that.

"Within the wall everything was just the same."

Was it?

"I came to a pool with a single clump of crimson peonies reflected black in it. I waited there. And a heron got up heavily from the pool's edge and flapped away through the trees. As I waited, Denise, *I kept my hand on the lacquered hilt of my sword.*"

We have italicised the difference.

From the point of view of style, the introduction of the sword has the effect of making the dream the reality. But, in fact, what the sword represents was there before. It has taken body. What is the meaning of the sword?

"There was a great sense of danger upon me, a sense of some effort, some selfless ambition, which I believe to have been a noble one. But I only knew—I only know—that I was in the willow garden, *in peril of my skin*, waiting for my wife."

In peril of my skin! The same flair of danger as in *The Lost Orchard* to which the lovers had escaped and where the man fell victim to a shot from an enemy lurking in the foliage, the same as in *The Interlude* where the Spanish-Indian girl is shot by a desert Indian. The girl is sacrified here, in what might be called the dream part of the story:

"I was seeking some means of expression exquisite enough for her, when her oval, pearl-pale face flashed upward in sudden fear, as quick as death. And quick as death the gray blade flashed at me out of the black darkness of the fronded peony leaves."

"There was a man hidden in the leaves. His stroke fell short. . .He crashed out of the clump for a second stroke that had no chance of missing . . . she slipped between."

Miss Pickthall anticipates an explanation of the story when she makes the young architect ask: "Why this dream of the Japanese garden, of what I find there and what I—lose?"

The word *wife* surprises us with its matter-of-factness at the end of the story. But what he found and lost in the garden was love. "A dream look! A dream face! But it has been enough to show me what love might be." Then, of course, he would want to get rid of the garden. The thought of peril and the sword expresses the subconscious fear that lurks in the heart of a sensitive and reticent person, and the modesty, concerning the relations between the sexes, especially in the heart of a woman whose instincts, for one reason or another, are repressed. We may conjecture that Miss Pickthall is writing her own emotional experience here; literature has some foundation in the affective experience of the writer. She dreamed of a garden of happiness, or love if you will, romanesque in the story, but real, and believed, as many women believe, that her happiness was very precarious and constantly menaced.

When she brings us into a garden—as she often does, because a garden or orchard or forest is a symbol of happiness—we feel that she knows the ground intimately. Where she has observed nature, cultivated or wild, it appears in her stories in detail.

"The muskrat trails at the edge of the marsh would hold him *for hours*, *puzzling out* their manifold intersections. A little wader with lemon-yellow legs, picking

water-snails from the sunken reed-roots, gave him *food for infinite reflection.* A turtle with a wet wine-red shell, creeping from a pond to lay her eggs in a channel of the warm mud, *he watched a whole evening.* . . . The chill silence of those mornings charmed him, lying hidden by the lagoons under an old tarpaulin, watching the mists heave and ripple away, and the wet dunes glitter in the sudden heatless sun; the moment when the first string of wild ducks sprang erect, careless of how many he scared, and the crack of his shot and the whirling tumble from the sky seemed simultaneous; and he waded thigh-deep, perhaps, to retrieve the pretty limp-necked thing, through bronzing lily-pads, and seed-vessels of the lesser iris, and leaves of arrowhead. Then he would turn homeward in the gradual widening of the world the fog had made so narrow, while day descended on him and his like a dove, whose wings were of silver and her feathers like gold."[5]

The feeling of delight we have when we read such passages has clearly nothing to do with any person in the story. If our interest were solely in a person, the exaggerations we have italicised would probably irritate us, for we should want to know what Maclear thought and felt during those protracted periods of apparently sterile observation and reflection. No, the delight is like the delight we feel when we see all those things with our own eyes. Yet again, as the last phrases of these quotations indicate, it is hard for her to keep the intimate reality; she will strive, against the stream of her own life-current, to bind her fancies to earth. She sees out of it; in January, February and March, in any month, she sees fauns as other people see rainbows.

[5] *The Bridge.*

She surprises us with an assortment of curious details, as the Pre-Raphaelites do:

> I have left a basket of dates
> In the cool dark room under the vine,
> Some curds set out in two little crimson plates
> And a flask of amber wine . . .
>
> Drowsing Joseph nodded near . . .
>
> Baby kids that butted hard
> In the shadowy stable yard . . .

The women poets who were born a decade later than Miss Pickthall, as they have turned from sentiment to intellect, have turned from soft to hard things, from soft phrases to precise similes. Take a short poem like *The Gardener's Boy* and notice how the tendriled words and facile imagery have rendered vapid the execution of a beautiful conception of joy contrasted with grief.

The garden is the Garden of Gethsemane. The gardener's boy is sick of love and he is singing about his beloved. He lies down to sleep, and as he dreams of her he smiles. Meanwhile Christ agonizes in that garden. There are two parts to the poem; two subjects, demanding different treatment, one lyric, the other realistic. Marjorie Pickthall made the distinction; the first two stanzas are lyrical, the last is in a different idiom altogether. When she wrote the first two stanzas she had in mind the great prototype of love song: Solomon's Song. And one reason why the poem is weak is because the time discrepancy is so apparent; a boy in the Garden of Gethsemane at the time of the crucifixion is singing a song in the language of King Solomon's day. But it may have been familiar to him; our Protestant tradition has kept the words of

the King James Bible singing in our ears. Let us, then, look at these two stanzas in the light of Solomon's Song.

All day I have fed on lilied thoughts of her.

Now Solomon, if I may use that name for the author of the Song, would not have sung those words. One characteristic of his Song is the precision of its similes. *Feed among the lilies*, yes. But not *fed on lilied thoughts*.

Once she gets the perfect definiteness of the original: *Her garments make a lovely stir, like the wind going in an almond tree*, which, if we omit the word *lovely*, is as good as "The smell of thy garments is like the smell of Lebanon." But as regards the rest, the language of Solomon's Song has suffered a change, a change in the direction of imprecision, a change that came in with the romantic age which substituted words for things.

A different language begins at the end of the second stanza, a narrative language:

When the palm shadow barred the juniper.

That sounds definite. Yet it is not enough to locate the scene. It is too general. And the last stanza, although it has the appearance of being a precise narrative, on a closer examination is seen to be vague and mysterious. Mystery and suggestion are faults in a poem like this; there is no room for vagueness in a poem which sets out to realize vivid contrast.

Smiling beside the agony of God

is a splendid line. The poem has been constructed purposely for that climactic finish. But that is the first hint that anything tragic was happening in that garden, and a stronger focus ought to have been given to the tragedy; as Vigny would have given it. But Vigny was

French, he was schooled in a tradition of French versification and what he wrote was dictated by his mind, not by the King James Bible. Again, we feel that that part of the poem which imitates the Hebrew should have fallen into another mould; a plan of stanza and rhyme is too rigid for a Hebrew lyric. The author should have reproduced the parallelism of the original, as she did in some of her other poems.

It must be said, however, that she always fretted under the constraint of the conventions, even in her verse. Her early poems have a strongly-marked lilt like the simplified waltz or mazurka a girl plays on the piano; and the constant quality in all her work is rhythm. The symmetry and concision of difficult forms that she may have admired in others, she tried and cast aside. Very few women have been dogged by an exacting sense of form. It was easier for her to let the lines swing to the rhythm in her head. If all the lines she wrote had previously swung in her head some of them were pretty close to the parallelism which scholars have found to be characteristic of primitive "oral" literature, and if we set any store by the theories of Marcel Jousse we may cite the following passages as samples of the poet's most individual style:

I have dwelt with the little fox,
with the owl and the gerfalcon

I have made my nest . . .

The great fair king that fought with us so well,
The great fair king that faced our hosts and fell . . .

Under her feet all beauty was laid low,
In her deep eyes all beauty was made clear . . .

And triple-termed anaphora:

> Still the young grape blossoms, but he knows not,
> Still the young dove lifts an irised wing,
> Still the roses redden, but there blows not
> One to greet the king.
>
> . . . .
>
> Now the sweet stream turns bitter with our tears,
> Now dies the star we followed in the west,
> Now are we sad and ill at ease with years,
> Lord, we would rest.
>
> . . . .
>
> Having known day, I pass into the night;
> Having long spoken with God, I hold my peace;
> Having long held the sword, I lay it down,
> And the new watch relieves me . . .

It is hardly necessary to invoke a theory of composition here. It was the rhythms of the biblical phrases that she was fond of that swung in her head when she wrote those passages A poet, busy with biblical themes, does not ponder over Deborah's Song, the Psalms, the Book of Job, and the prologue to the Gospel of Saint John with impunity. That is not denying the rhetorical effect of the lines, their insinuating power to move us to sadness by their balanced, pathetic gestures, their iterated melancholy. But the purpose that parallelism served in oral literature can hardly be said to exist any longer, and instead of being the poet's instinctive manner of expression her imitation simply indicates that she wished to induce the full flavour of her text.

There is a very striking individual pattern in one of her early poems: alternating stanzas of nine lines and eleven lines, beginning with a group of three long lines of five feet and continuing with lines of three and five feet,

as though she had deliberately fashioned an "art poétique" on Verlainian precepts:

> De la musique avant toute chose,
> Et pour cela préfère l'impair,
> Plus vague et plus soluble dans l'air,
> Sans rien en lui qui pese ou qui pose.

Nixies and fairies will probably never achieve distinction. But this poem, which she published when she was only seventeen, is a miracle of rhythmic feeling:

> O keep the world forever at the dawn,
> Ere yet the opals, cobweb-strung, have dried,
> Ere yet too bounteous gifts have marred the morn.
>
> . . . .
>
> Ere yet the silver ripples on the verge
> Have turned to amethyst.
>
> . . . .
>
> And call the winds away
> Ere yet they sigh
>
> . . . .
>
> O keep the world forever at the dawn,
> Yet, keeping so, let nothing lifeless seem,
> But hushed, as if the miracle of morn
> Were trembling in its dream.

Ere yet the evil day! It is a woman pleading, a woman who exults in the birth of beauty, tenaciously clinging to happiness which she knows is doomed; every line is softened by the muted emotion in her voice. O keep, O keep . . . keep all things hushed. And what shall we say of the decorative ending

> And o'er the crested pine shall hang one star?

Is it a memory of some book on Christian symbolism,

or is it a reverence such as primitive people have for solitary objects in nature, or is it simply a romantic poet's affection for the words *one* and *last*? They used to have a certain emotional power. Why dawn? Because as a poet she prefers half-light to mid-day, fading stars and hush to daylight's noise and high visibility, and so on, an atmosphere in which she can speak of *an angel's finger-span*, *murmuring melody*, *veil*, *pearlier mist*, *silver ripples*, *shadows lingering dim*, *still and drowsy wing*, *breathless hush*, *peace*, *half-seen beauties of the rose*, *repose*, *whispering shadows*, *airy tremors*, *sweet in promise*, *shadowy moths*: words with romantic potential, an atmosphere in which things are toned down by mist and hush till they are half-seen, half-heard.

A few years later she wrote the counterpart to this poem, "The Immortal", wherein, with tender melancholy, she sees the last of these beautiful things disappearing into the evening of the world.

To find a symbolist poem of such romantic beauty at this early date of Miss Pickthall's life might be no surprise if we knew that she had been reading Maeterlinck and Fiona Macleod, but her descent and her femininity are sufficient explanations; symbolist art is feminine and Celtic. No wonder that "Armorel" is "Mr. Yeats' favourite."[6] There is moonlight in it and bats, and elfin voices, and "Gates o' dream are held ajar." There is a garden in it, and Mary-lilies and a white moth. The Celtic call is there at its purest.

Her pictures of the sea are not the pictures Dauber wanted to paint. Compared to his they are nursery pictures of the sea:

> The tides go up and the tides go down

[6]Dr. Pierce: *op. cit.*

In vain the long-ridged swell shall raise the keel

No more our prow shall leap above the foam

Gods! how the keel cut seaward through the blue
When the long galley raced the roving stars!

Out of the winds' and the waves' riot,
Out of the loud foam.

There is no storm at sea in Miss Pickthall's pictures, no picture of men in ships battling with mountainous waves, no glory of battle, no cry of conquest, but soft, unexciting pictures, and the old trick of wringing the sentiment out of "last" and "no more". But the swing of the old sea-chanties is there, and the interior rhymes and endings of an old Irish song:

And a dawn will *break* when my soul shall *wake* and
call from the isles to me—
"Come gather me *up* like a silver *cup* from the heart
of the swaying sea,
Like wave-washed *gold* from a wreck of *old*, and hide
me safe in your breast."

Miss Pickthall chose mariners, as she chose certain landsmen, not to picture the sea, certainly not to picture it buffeting men and ships, but to show how strongly man is attached to nature. Pieter Marinus, the old sinner, may be ever so fain for the Lord now, he cannot tear himself away from the old call and belief, he must die at sea, and nothing will pry him off the things he loves:

But let me lie awhile in these Thy seas.
Let the soft Gulf Stream and the long South Drift,
And the swift tides that rim the Labrador,
Beat on my soul and wash it clean again.

Washed clean for a Christian paradise! A Christian element is trying to emerge, but pagan belief has been bred in the bone. It is almost beyond the power of the Christian religion to stifle the call in a pagan's heart. Poor Joachim! Monastic rule could not do it, for

> I can hear a wild swan calling
> From the marshes broad and dim,
> "Follow, follow, Joachim."

Fiona Macleod tells of a "man who went (from Iona) to the mainland, but could not see to plough, because the brown fallows became waves that splashed noisily about him. The same man went to Canada, and got work in a great warehouse; but among the bales of merchandise he heard the singular note of the sandpiper, and every hour the sea-fowl confused him with their crying."

The same kinship with nature, and irrepressible attachment, Miss Pickthall describes in *The Woodsman in the foundry* and *Forest born*. The very fear of nature dying haunts *The little fauns to Proserpine* and *Persephone returning to Hades*—condensed, of course, around a different race of symbols; the poet has "gone mad over the Iliad."[7]

Souls can be drawn away from the spell of the world's voices (and this is where Miss Pickthall comes out of the Celtic atmosphere of Yeats and Macleod) by a spell of greater power. Nature, the setting of the sun and the majestic birth of day will always make men hold their breath in wonder no matter where, but only by those disposed to a religious state of soul will nature be seen transfigured by "the wonderful grace of the Lord." In the presence of God's revelation of Himself, the prophet or dreamer is enthralled, "his head all misty with dreams,

[7]Dr. Pierce quotes these as Miss Pickthall's words.

and his eyes on fire," he hardly remembers that he has a sister and that there are common duties to be done: cattle to be fed and watered. He suffers from a kind of mind-dark, as the Gaels call it, but it is not Gaelic.

Yea, my children turn from me and are afraid
Because the hand of the Lord is upon me,

says Deborah.

To dazzle a lover with an intenser passion, to bring before a bridegroom's adoring eyes the transcendent beauty of Christ's face! That is a dramatist's or an artist's touch, a Rossetti touch, you may say. And then what do the winds of the dawn say? Not "Follow, follow, Joachim" but

"Follow, follow
Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter's son."

That was a tense moment in the house at Cana. And the change in the poet is significant: she has come through a surrender to the wonder of the world to a surrender to the wonder of life. Yet it is a poet's surrender, not a lover's, couched in the pretty imagery of poetry.

Love, I am fain for thy glowing grace
As the pool for the star, as the rain for the rill.
Turn to me, trust to me, mirror me
As the star in the pool, as the cloud in the sea.
Love, I looked awhile in His face
And was still.
. . . .

And the lifting, shimmering flight of the swallow
Breaks in a curve on the brink of morn,
Over the sycamores, over the corn.
Cling to me, cleave to me, prison me
As the mote in the flame, as the shell in the sea,

> For the winds of the dawn say, "Follow, follow
> Jesus Bar-Joseph, the carpenter's son."

The symbols have not changed, only the symbolism has been transferred. Singularly enough, yet not so strange since she usually transfers her feelings to a male character, it is the bridegroom who is speaking. Partly on that account, and partly because the feeling is overdone with pretty pictures, the poem expresses an artistic but not a passionately human experience. You remember the Rossetti poem. Mary Magdalene has left a festal procession to go to the house of Simon the Pharisee where she knows Christ is. Her lover is pleading with her to go to the banquet-house. She put him away, she puts all her old lovers away.

> "Oh loose me! See'st thou not my Bridegroom's face
> That draws me to Him?"
> she cries in her ecstacy,
> "He needs me, calls me, loves me: let me go!"

There's no mistaking the sincerity of that cry.

While Miss Pickthall continued to publish poems with Biblical settings, *Vanitas Vanitatum*, *In the Gardens of Shushan;* or inspired by medieval Christian legend, *St. Yves' Poor;* her imagination sporadically settled on the most picturesque subjects in Canada: Indians, Jesuits, and French-Canadians. She eventually turned to native Canadian themes for what she thought was to be the great work of her life.

A crisis came into her life with her mother's death in 1910 when she found herself loosed from her moorings and adrift. She discontinued writing, and for a while assisted in the library of Victoria College in Toronto, then in 1912 went to stay with relatives in England.

No matter where she went now she would be confronted with a world of real things, she was faced with the necessity of earning her own living and the obvious way, since her health was not robust, was by writing. For six summers she lived in a cottage on the Wiltshire Downs and literally wrote herself to death; her output increased to feverish heights in 1919-20: "Just think of it," she says, "a novel, a play and sixteen stories between September and April! That's an unheard of production, you know! Simply crazy." It betokens not only a well-stored mind but a knowledge of the craft and a gift of fluent expression.

The play was *The Wood Carver's Wife* and, we have Dr. Pierce's word for it, "in some respects it stood higher in her own estimation than almost anything else she had written." In what respects?

It is an excerpt from life, like her most perfect stories *The Prisoner*, or *The prehistoric Man*; it deepens in seriousness and moves to a moment where the lives of three people converge in a crisis; it is a rounded and smooth piece of art like *Fisher of the Moon* and *The Seventh Dream*. It is a drama which first and foremost aspires to poetry and it has the shortcomings of a hybrid form; we are not persuaded that Jean talked like that: that language is Marjorie Pickthall's. Although she chose for her dramatic poem a picturesque craft which flourished, and still flourishes, in Quebec, and thereby gave herself an opportunity for working with human interests and motives, she created but little interest in the craft and subordinated human motives to an idea, an old idea: a wood carver's will to make his wood incarnate with a perfect resemblance of a human form. There is a hint of Morris's *Pygmalion* in the poem, and not a little flavour of Browning's *Andrea Del Sarto*.

The ideal Mary in its perfect expression is there set up before his mind's eye. In front of him is a model whom he taunts and grieves until she holds her dead lover's sword across her knees and looks down upon it with eyes, "the barren houses of despair", like those of Mary looking down upon the dead Christ. Under his hand is the cedar wood which, after the ultimate gashes of his tools, becomes the ideal reality. These parallelisms give splendid unity and finish to the piece which progresses in intensity—skilfully done—as the artistic conscience makes everything bend before its ideal.

> You are hard.

Dorette (his wife and model) reproaches him,

> You love your cold woods more than loveliness
> Of look and touch.

And that conscience retorts with the implication: "Yes, but imagine yourself elevated to a shrine prepared for you in the Church!"

> They'll see you there between the candle flames
> A hundred years. The lads will worship you
> And maids with innocent eyes will wonder at you.
> Your beauty will lift many souls to God.
>
> . . . .
>
> They will hail you mystic rose,
> The tower of ivory, the golden house,
> Sea-star and vase of honour.

And if Jean is a symbol, so are they all, all symbols. Dorette, like the Bridegroom bound by a vow, trembles in the thrall of love: "Hold me fast against his voice"; like Joachim churched, she is driven to madness between duty and the call to the "forest" (or garden):

When will you to the forest,
My dear wild dove? I saw red lilies there
Burning in sun-bleached grass, and gentians spread
Beside a little pool, less blue than he,
The great kingfisher poised on the dead bough.
Black squirrels chirred against the quarrelling jays,
There came a flight of emerald hummingbirds,
While through the wind-swayed walls of reed and vine
Laced the quick dragonflies. Sweet, will you come?

. . . .

In those deep woods
I found white flowers beside a little stream
With three waxed petals round a core of gold.
I would have brought them to you, but I thought
To crown you with them there. . .

And we are not surprised to find that she is afraid of the shadows in the forest, and that noble Love, which thought to get away unscathed, is killed in the bushes, pierced through with a long arrow from a watchful enemy's bow.

We may divine, therefore, that the drama pleased the author in the following respects: it is a smoothly finished composition; its chief character is the embodiment of an artistic principle and at the same time a craftsman of an ancient craft; and the other characters, Dorette, Louis de Lotbiniere, the young nobleman, Shagonas, the Indian boy, while interesting the audience as part of a picturesque and native historical tableau, are human symbols of her own *état d'âme*. The time-distance from the subjects is sufficient to permit her to lend them her own idiom, which is romanesque and beautiful; but since they all speak as poets, the author could not be satisfied with them as real characters. In the next two or three years, according as her art progresses toward reality, which

means coming into the present out of the past, to convey the illusion of reality, it will have to modify chiefly its idiom.

Marjorie Pickthall spent the last two years of her life in British Columbia. Her health was failing her but she managed to write some stories and began a novel, which was to be called *The Beaten Man*. It was to be the beginning of her work on purely Canadian themes, toward "the birth of Canadian legend, the making of the white man's myth"; for she believed that, besides its other natural resources, Canada possessed the raw ore of literature. The scene was laid in the region of the Pacific coast and in recent times and demanded realistic treatment. "Upon this latest story," says Dr. Pierce, "she fastened her highest hopes." She therefore felt that she could master her problems. She had grappled with them in her other two novels and floundered. Perhaps she would succeed this time. But what did it mean? On the first page of the book in which she outlined the plot she wrote:

> "*Hold it down* to curt matter-of-fact detail, as opposed to poetic description.
>
> *Bring out* the *lovely irony* of Harvanger's love for Gilmory, the gradual ousting of Annora from his mind, the *implacable attack* made on him by this good and exquisite thing.
>
> *Emphasize* his leadership; how he finds a way out for them, how he almost destroys Steve's love for Annora, how he absolutely overcomes his own love for Gilmory in his bitter clinging to evil. His brief redemption.
>
> *Can* the fantastic."[8]

[8]Dr. Pierce: *op. cit.*

It meant denying herself the use of some of her gifts: poetry of melodious phrasing and fanciful imagery and, in part, the thrill of fantastic adventure; and, on the other hand, bringing into play her gift of careful observation of nature-detail which could serve as accessory: a gift which she always used magnificently. The demands made upon a modern novelist include also a close knowledge of men and women of conflicting character so that his art may reflect their varied feelings and thoughts in language which they use ordinarily; their reactions in general to their environment as well as their actions in given circumstances. The Pacific coast had just enough romanesque elements in it—the virgin forest, pioneer life, "longing, sacrifice, the sense of fate", sieges and escapes, with the Japs thrown in—to keep her imagination charged. As the plot stands, the book would have contained a fair amount of fantastic adventures, but that it would have been a near approach to reality we cannot doubt. That would have been a remarkable achievement for an artist of Marjorie Pickthall's temperament.

"You might speak to Balzac about your mother," Sainte-Beuve remarks, "about your sister, or your mistress: 'Come,' he would say, 'that's all right, but let us get back to reality. . .What shall we do with Nucingen, with the Duchesse de Langeais?' He had turned life around; the dream was his reality."[9]

And so with Marjorie Pickthall. After finishing *Little Hearts* she "fidgeted about all over the place, vaguely looking for Michael and Anthony." She lived with her characters, or rather she lived their adventures; *that* was her reality. The stuff that possessed her senses and mind, things in nature and what she selected from

[9] *Nouveaux Lundis*: Vol. VIII.

her reading, was warmed and tinted when it left her pen; for her feminine heart had yearned over it and thrown around it all the festoons of a poet's symbolism. Hence the charm and the pathos which we feel in her work. The power thus to transmute reality into poetic reality was her great gift. Her imagination was as keen as her physical vision, but it could only be nourished by a great variety of experience. She possessed exquisite artistic sensibility; had she been gifted with as resourceful a social instinct her fame and fortune would have been immense.

SELECTED LIST *of* BOOKS

SPRING *by Canadians* 1932

MURDERS AND MYSTERIES (A Canadian Series)

By W. Stewart Wallace $3.00

A recapitulation of the available evidence in fifteen or sixteen of the most thrilling murder mysteries in the history of Canadian crime.

THE GRAIN TRADE OF CANADA

By D. A. MacGibbon $2.50

A book that all students of economics should possess. A comprehensive study of the development of the grain trade and matters dealing with the routine of export.

BACK TO PROSPERITY

The Great Opportunity of the Empire Conference. By Stephen Leacock $1.00

"It is a relief to have a man of the standing of Leacock of McGill writing thought-provoking, not to mention argument-provoking material." — *Financial Post.*

A LIBERAL EDUCATION IN A CHANGING WORLD

By R. C. Wallace $1.25

A discussion of what, in the field of education, has gone before and a survey of educational impediments and equipment—followed by Dr. Wallace's challenge: "Are our educational methods meeting our world of to-day?"

SOME ASPECTS OF THE THEORIES AND WORKINGS OF CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

By W. P. M. Kennedy $1.75

A book of four lectures contrasting Canadian and United States constitutional systems: I. The State and the Law; II. Theories of Law and the Constitutional Law of the British Empire; III. Law and Custom in the Canadian Constitution; IV. Some Problems in the Workings of Canadian Institutions.

SOCIETY: ITS STRUCTURES AND CHANGES

By R. M. MacIver $4.00

A new analysis of the groups and system of relationship which constitute present-day society, of the principles which give it coherence and solidarity, and of the processes of change and evolution which explain its present form and character.

CANADA

By Alexander Brady $4.00

A survey of the forces which are shaping the political, economic and cultural development of modern Canada. A glance at historical origins is included for comparison and explanation with the present.

THE STORY OF ENGLISH LITERATURE

By E. K. Broadus. Trade Edition $6; Educational Edition $2.25

This history of English literature reads like a romance. A story of fact told in such a way that it reads like fiction.

FAR PLACES

By Jas. Mackintosh Bell ..$2.50

The travels of a geologist around the Mackenzie Basin, in New Caledonia, Russian Central Asia, Jamaica and Albania. Well illustrated with maps.

A DRYAD OF NANAIMO

By Audrey Alexandra Brown, $2.00

"The poetical debut of Miss Brown is an event . . . she excels in descriptive passages."—*Mail and Empire*, Toronto.

THE MEN OF THE LAST FRONTIER

By Grey Owl $3.50

A marvelously exciting story of the out-posts of adventure in Canada, reflecting the life of a man spent in the open spaces.

THE RUSSIAN EMERGES

By Nicholas Ignatieff $1.00

A native Assessment of the Soviet Experiment written with instinctive understanding and sympathy of a great people.

MACMILLAN
TORONTO

University of Toronto Studies

HISTORY AND ECONOMICS

CONTRIBUTIONS TO CANADIAN ECONOMICS

Vol. 1.

James Mavor: An introduction to Canadian economic history.
H. R. Kemp: Fertility of marriage in Canada.
G. E. Jackson: Cycles of unemployment in Canada.
V. W. Bladen: The size of the establishment in Canadian and American industry.

---------- **50c**

Vol. 2.

J. E. Latimer: Labour requirements in farming.
W. A. Mackintosh: The use of case material in economics.
H. Angus: A survey of economic problems awaiting investigation in British Columbia.
H. A. Innis: The teaching of economic history in Canada.

---------- **$1.00**

Vol. 3.

C. A. Curtis: The Canadian banks and war finance.
J. A. Maxwell: Expenditures of Canadian provincial governments.

---------- **$1.00**

Vol. 4.

R. H. Fleming: Phyn Ellin and Company of Schenactady.
C. R. Fay: Canadian and Imperial history.

---------- **$1.00**

Vol. 5.

D. A. MacGibbon: The future of the Canadian export trade in wheat.
M. L. Bladen: Railway construction in Canada to the year 1885.
H. A. Innis: Recent literature in the fur trade. (In the Press.)

These volumes include a bibliography of literature in Canadian economics from 1920 to the present date and are intended for the future to give a half-yearly current bibliography.

They include also a list of theses on Canadian economics in Canadian universities for the same period and lists of theses in preparation at various universities.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS

Toronto 5, Ontario

STUDIES IN ENGLISH

BY MEMBERS OF

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, TORONTO

COLLECTED BY

PRINCIPAL MALCOLM W. WALLACE

CONTENTS

I. Swift's View of Poetry — *Herbert Davis*

II. Collins and the Creative Imagination — *A. S. P. Woodhouse*

III. The Pantisocracy Scheme and its Immediate Background — *J. R. MacGillivray*

IV. Shelley's Relation to Berkeley and Drummond — *G. S. Brett*

V. Inhibitions of Browning's Poetry — *J. F. Macdonald*

VI. The French Reputation of Matthew Arnold — *E. K. Brown*

Price $2.50 Postpaid

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS

The Canadian Historical Review

In Succession To

The Review of Historical Publications Relating to Canada

(Founded 1896)

Published quarterly in March, June, September and December

Subscription $2.00 per year.

Books for review and correspondence with regard to contributions to the REVIEW should be sent to the Managing Editor at the University of Toronto Library, Toronto 5, Ontario.

Subscriptions and all business correspondence should be sent to the publishers

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS

TORONTO 5, ONTARIO

The UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY

PUBLISHED IN

OCTOBER, JANUARY, APRIL, JULY

Editor: PROFESSOR G. S. BRETT, M.A.
Business Manager: R. J. HAMILTON, B.A.

Editorial communications should be addressed to the Editor, University of Toronto. Articles for publication will be considered promptly and paid for when published.

All enquiries regarding subscriptions, current and back numbers, advertising and other business matters should be addressed to the Publication Department, The University of Toronto Press.

SUBSCRIPTION FORM

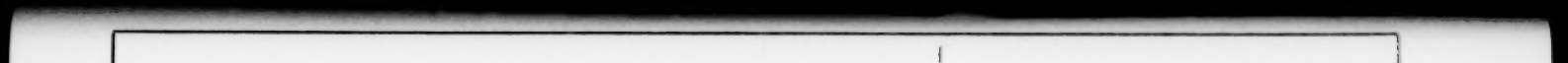
Please enter my name as a subscriber to THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO QUARTERLY *for one year, for which I enclose $2.00.*

Name .....

Address .....

.....

The subscription to start with the ..... *issue.*

PUBLISHED BY

THE UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS